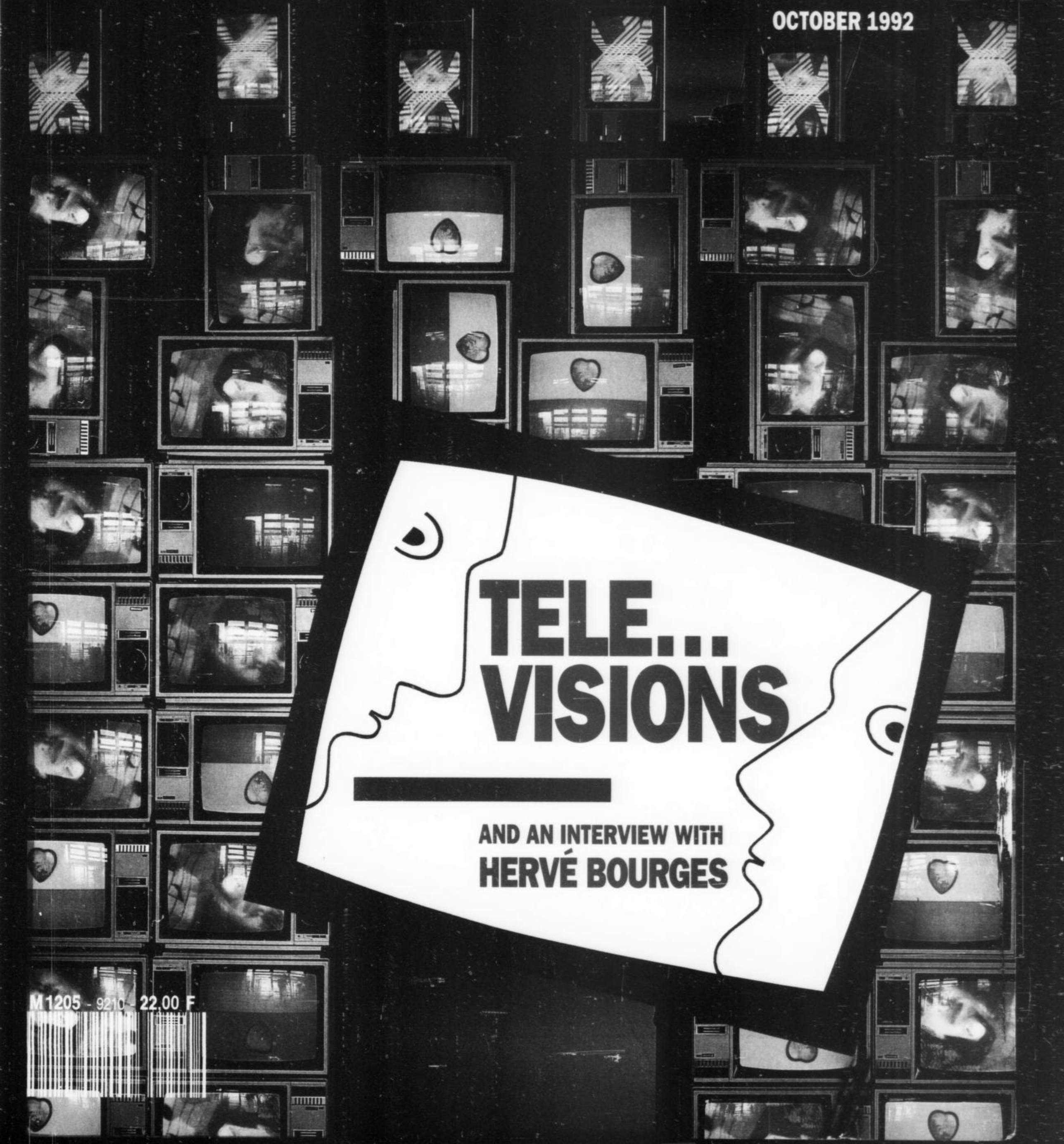
The UNESCO COURIER

OCTOBER 1992



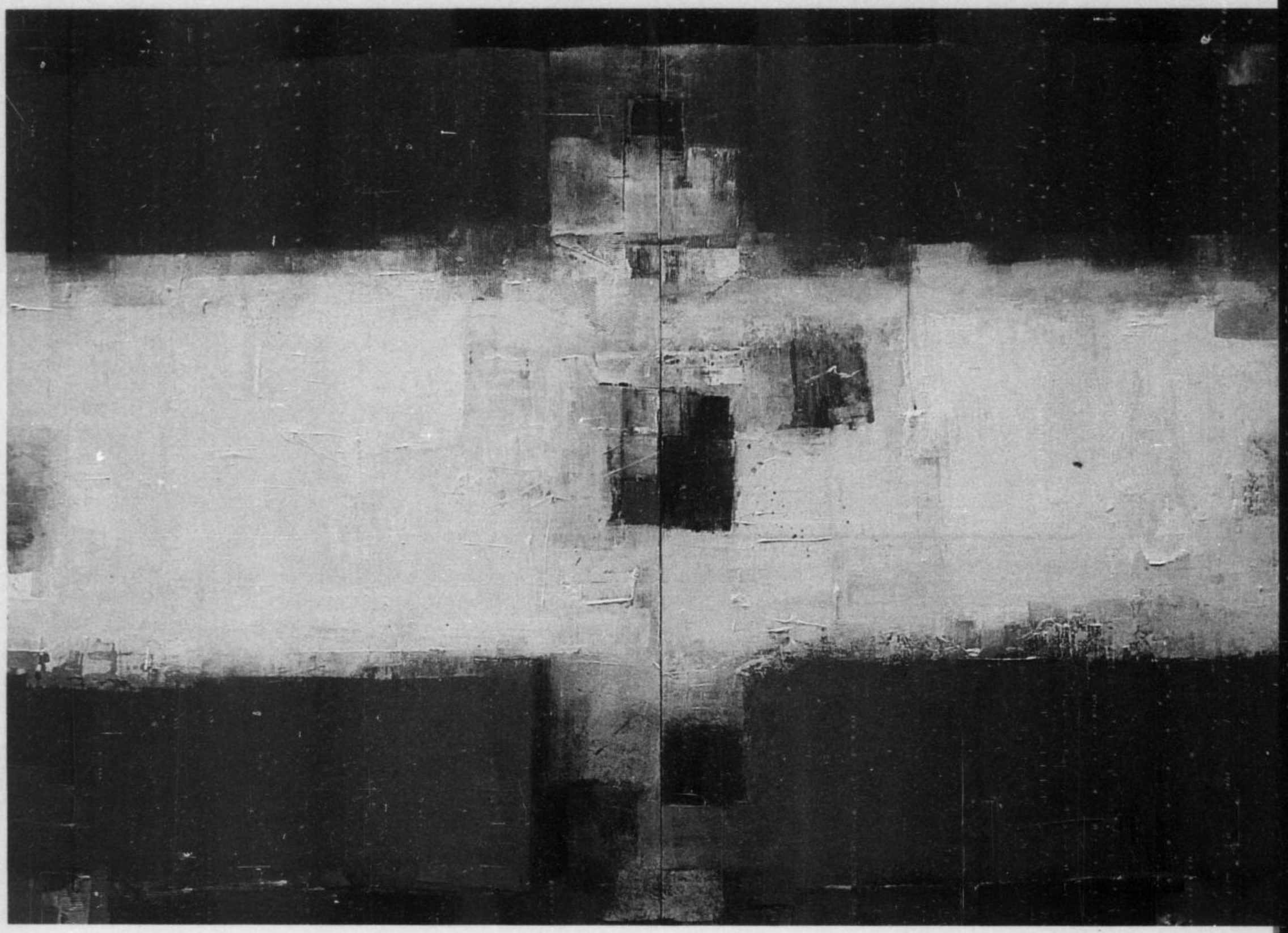
TELE... VISIONS

AND AN INTERVIEW WITH
HERVÉ BOURGES

M 1205 - 9210 - 22,00 F

E N C O U N T E R S

We invite readers to send us photographs to be considered for publication in this feature. Your photo should show a painting, a sculpture, piece of architecture or any other subject which seems to be an example of cross-fertilization between cultures. Alternatively, you could send us pictures of two works from different cultural backgrounds in which you see some striking connection or resemblance. Please add a short caption to all photographs.



EQ-WAH-001

1990, acrylic on wood (200 by 140 cm)
by Poh Siew Wah

In this diptych, the Singaporean painter Poh Siew Wah has sought to depict the human endeavour to achieve what he calls "equilibrium", an ideal of harmony uniting humankind and nature as well as linking human beings themselves. Poh has written that his work is "much inspired by Italian Renaissance architecture, the idea of orderliness of Piet Mondrian, and Kandinsky's call for spirituality in art."

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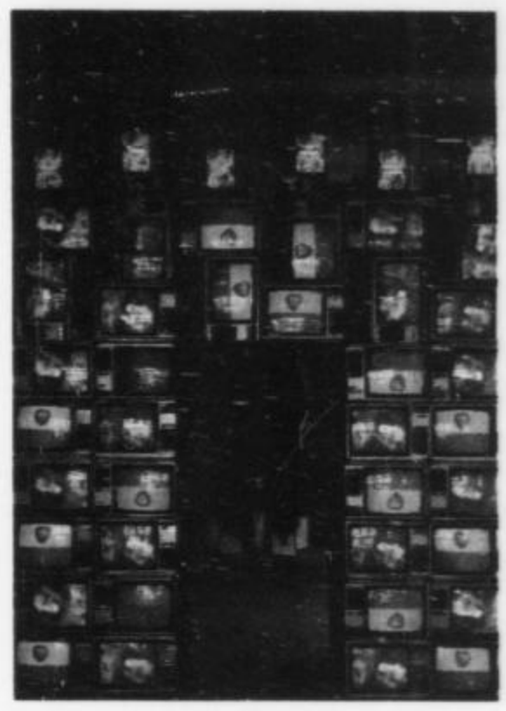

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Arc double face (1985), a work by the Korean artist Nam June Paik. (Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris).
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Guy Hennebelle

"The Governments of the States parties to this Constitution on behalf of their peoples declare,
"that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed . . .
"that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.
"For these reasons, the States parties . . . are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives. . . ."

EXTRACT FROM THE PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF UNESCO, LONDON, 16 NOVEMBER 1945

The UNESCO COURIER
45th year — Published monthly in 33 languages and in Braille

HERVÉ BOURGES

talks to Bahgat Elnadi and Adel Rifaat

Hervé Bourges began his career in journalism as editor-in-chief of the French weekly *Témoignage chrétien*. An early supporter of Algerian independence, he was from 1962 to 1965 technical adviser to the President of the Algerian Republic and director of Algeria's Ministry of Youth and Popular Education. After serving as director of several schools of journalism and research institutes, he became director of UNESCO's Office of Public Information and spokesman for the Director-General (1980-1981). He then became head of Radio France Internationale and in 1983 was appointed chairman-director-general of the French public television channel TF1, a post which he held until the channel was privatized in 1987. In December 1990 he became chairman of the public-sector channels A2 and FR3. He has written a number of books including *Décoloniser l'information* (1978), *Les cinquante Afriques* (with C. Wauthier, 1979), *Une chaîne sur les bras* (1987) and *Un amour de télévision* (1989).

You are a champion of public-service television. Could you tell us what you think about the comparative merits—and demerits—of public and private systems in this field, always bearing in mind that the whole issue is more complicated in the countries of the South where, in many cases, state control of the audiovisual media, especially television, is synonymous neither with freedom nor quality.

–Before answering perhaps I should say a word or two about myself. I am in charge of the two public channels of French television and before that I was between 1983 and 1987 head of another channel, TF1, which was also then public. I am a professional, not a theorist, and I will answer your questions in the light of my experience of communication in general and of French television in particular.

In the countries of Western Europe, which developed their television networks in the 1950s and 1960s, the basic principle of public service in the audiovisual media is to enable the small screen to serve the interests of the community. One characteristic of democracies is that they encourage respect for impartiality, so that communications are not governed by economic interests or political pressures. Here, obviously, I am talking in ideal terms.

In practice, the public service always has to cope with all kinds of contingencies. There is a budget, authorities to which it is answerable, red tape, a governing body, civil servants, unions. . . . But private-sector television doesn't have a completely free hand, either. The product is appealing in the case of a pay-TV channel like Canal+ in France which sells itself on its quality. Elsewhere advertising—the be-all and end-all for shareholders—is king, and no amount of rules and regulations can transform a supermarket into a cultural centre. The French system is a mixed system which could in many respects be improved. Some people think it's neither one thing nor another. There is no longer a monopoly, and the public-sector channels are partly financed by advertising. Those who look back nostalgically to the old days think that the programmes are not as good as they were—a case that is not proven.

One also hears it said that perhaps advertising should be banned from the public-sector channels in France, or that one of the public-sector channels should be privatized. It is hard to say what the right formula should be. It's a political matter. My own firm belief is that public service television limited to a single channel would soon become a has-been, a travesty of public service.

I am also convinced that this is a futile debate. Viewers do not choose to watch programmes because of what they feel about the shareholders of the channels that broadcast them.

On the other hand two things are certain. Firstly, since the establishment of an independent regulatory body ten years ago, news and current affairs broadcasting has been carried out in a context of freedom and pluralism. Secondly, since programme supply has increased to six channels, the French watch television on average half an hour more per day than they did ten years ago. You may think that this isn't much of an achievement, but the objectivity of the figures is a factor in its favour.

Viewers express their choice through the handiest form of voting instrument that exists, the remote control. No theory can escape the zapping test.

Audience movements are signs of vitality. After fifty years of television, viewers express their choices through the handiest form of voting instrument that exists, the remote control. No theory can escape the zapping test.

So public attitudes must constantly be observed and studied; audience expectations must be deciphered.

There are no ready-made solutions in the world of the audiovisual media. The French model—insofar as such a model exists—could certainly not be exported as it stands, either to the countries of the East or to the countries of the South. Some soap operas and game-shows may have an audience in many countries. But not programming concepts.

Pluralism and professionalism, on the other hand, are universally valid ground-rules. Pluralism, by which I mean of course constitutional pluralism, is the basic condition of the exercise of freedom of information. But there must also be economic and professional pluralism. When there is only one source, a single newspaper, a single broadcaster, the temptation is too strong to . . . let us say . . . stage-manage the debate. Such a system is rarely efficient in the medium or long term. And it will be even less so now that the new information technologies are abolishing frontiers.

As for professionalism, I would say that it is winning its spurs with the arrival of a third generation of television people who did not experience the enthusiasm of the pioneers or the disenchantment of the children of 1968.

With the increasing globalization of the audiovisual media, people everywhere are becoming more receptive in outlook, and peoples and cultures are being brought closer together. On the other hand, images of violence and pornography are spreading and so, perhaps more insidiously, are nationalist, xenophobic and even racist ideas. How can we reconcile the demands of openness and freedom of expression with the need to prohibit excesses, without seeming to advocate censorship?

—Today the public calls the tune. This is increasingly evident in America and Europe. But we must understand the freedom-related phenomena which are taking place in the countries of the South, where satellites have brought the audiovisual frontiers tumbling down, not only in big cities like Algiers and Dakar but in regions where TV had never reached before. There are more and more broadcasters. The supply of programmes is diversifying, from the big nation-wide networks, such as the BBC, Canal France International, the Servicio Iberoamericano de Noticias, to pay TV, religious broadcasting, educational and cultural television, and language programmes. . . .

Something important is happening. Whereas national television networks enjoyed an undisputed monopoly until recently, outside voices are beginning to be heard. Television without frontiers establishes *de facto* cultural and political pluralism. More than ever the national broadcasters will have to harmonize their strategies and make lasting partnerships with other stations and with international organizations. If swift action is not taken, some countries will be deprived of their means of audiovisual expression, except when it comes to home news.

If swift action is not taken, some countries will be deprived of their own means of audiovisual expression, except when it comes to home news.

Some satellites also beam violent or pornographic programmes—different countries and cultures have different views about these matters—but I think that this is a marginal phenomenon.

As far as we are concerned, it is to the credit of public-service television in France that any programme is rejected for domestic or external broadcasting if it is likely to encourage social, cultural, political, religious or sexual exclusion. But it is not our role—and here I can perhaps speak on behalf of all the other broadcasters—to try to ban programmes on other channels than those which are under our authority.

We are committed to the fundamental principle of the editorial responsibility of the broadcaster, which is a corollary of freedom of communication, and experience has taught us to be wary of all forms of external control as a matter of principle, however well intentioned. Censorship is always pernicious. The person in charge must be answerable for his or her programmes before the competent legal authorities.

Interestingly enough, an international law of audiovisual communication is emerging. There have been many examples of this, recently, in the fields of copyright and performing rights. It is now clear that an international broadcaster is answerable to the law. There will soon be no more room for pirates, except on the high seas!

Expressions of nationalism or even xenophobia are not, unfortunately, confined to any particular broadcasting system. They are everywhere. People must combat them at their own level of responsibility. Personally, I am constantly preoccupied with this.

Does the influence of viewing figures on television programming necessarily mean that programmes will become more mediocre? Driven by competition from the private sector and by the need for advertising revenue, the public sector seems to be heading inexorably in this direction. Does catering to a mass audience necessarily mean pandering to the lowest common denominator?

—Here you are alluding to an internal French debate. Believe me, the accusation is quite groundless. Go to Britain, Italy or Spain. Listen and compare. There have never been so many programmes about discoveries, culture, creation—on French television at any rate. Our public service fully performs its role of providing information, entertainment and culture by offering to the widest public the broadest range of programmes—what we call television for all.

News broadcasting is free, comprehensive in its scope, pluralistic. Live broadcasting makes it possible to experience great events from the inside.

In the early 1960s, Jean Prat's adaptation of Aeschylus's *Persae* was watched by a million viewers and people still talk about it as a miracle thirty years later. At that time, however, viewers had no choice, there was only one channel, it was Aeschylus or nothing.

Last July, Puccini's masterpiece, *Tosca,* with Domingo, Raimondi and Malfitano was watched by viewers all over the world, including two million in France. Thousands of viewers had a choice between at least three programmes. The audience meter does that too; it measures real success.

So why should there be there such a misunderstanding?

I think that television is a kind of hostage in a wider social and cultural debate about the role of the school, about leisure, about training. Television isn't the real culprit, but a scapegoat is needed. In the past, French governments believed that it was indispensable to hold the keys of information. Until the day when politicians realized that the media did not form opinion—not by swimming against the tide at any rate.

Is it possible to imagine, in the North, television that would also be valid for viewers in the South?

—Here we are still making empirical observations rather than scientific measurements.

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We are discovering the effects of the internationalization of the media and the transmission speed of images and ideas. There are three major poles. The United States, Japan and Europe share a market in which the economic and cultural stakes are immense. But viewers, who participate to varying degrees in the globalization of cultural attitudes and consumer practices, live in a specific context. So, with the globalization of news and programming, there seems to be an increasing need for programmes that are less remote. How can we define this need? How can we satisfy it? I think that these questions should provide food for thought when it comes to organizing efficient co-operation.

Television is already fifty years old. How far has it fulfilled the promise of its early years?

—It made no promises, except to open a window on the world. And it has done this. So what expectations has television betrayed? Perhaps those of visionaries such as André Malraux, who imagined that its transforming powers would be equal to those of the printing-press. The extraordinary opening up that has occurred has not changed the world, only ways of life.

Today, in a country like France, the average viewer watches television for three hours a day. Watching television has taken the place of individual or group leisure activities such as playing cards, family life, meeting the neighbours. Old traditions kept alive by story-tellers are becoming museum pieces. The oral tradition is disappearing. As McLuhan said, we live in a global village. But doubtless people have not changed. When something close to home happens, local ties soon take precedence over universal affairs.

How do you see the future of television and cinema?

—The cinemas have emptied and the viewer has become more of a stay-at-home because of the development of television. There was a time when people went to the cinema almost every week. It was the family pastime. Today cinema-going is largely confined to the under-twenty-fives. If there is still so much vitality in the film industry, it is because it has learned to adapt to new forms of image-consumption—television and video. TV provides most of the financing for films. This is true in France where it has always been government policy to support French cinema, but also in the United States, under the influence of market forces. Nowadays showing films in cinemas is in a sense the Formula 1 of the audiovisual media. It acts as a test-bench and a source of prestige. This is an important change, but from an artistic point of view it is perhaps no more fundamental than the change from silent to talking films.

Will the new audiovisual techniques, especially high-definition TV, pave the way for higher quality and greater creativity or only an increasing preoccupation with mass entertainment?

—To my mind, neither one thing nor the other. High-definition television uses the same basic techniques as mass television—Hertzian wave diffusion and the cathode ray tube. All it changes is sound and image quality at the moment of reception by satellite

Already people can do their own TV programming; they can zap.

or by cable. There is no fundamental technical improvement from the point of view of the producer. The best image for high definition is still 35 mm or 70 mm film, and digital technology can be applied to all kinds of supports. As for the wide screens manufacturers envisage for the future, let me tell you that they will exist in ordinary standard versions. What is really happening, behind all the technological innovations, is a big fight between the major European, American and Japanese companies. Considering the speed with which the economies of the three industrial blocs are hooking up, this is perhaps the last great challenge for the electronics industry in the twentieth century.

The effects of technological change are often unpredictable. Think of FM radio which has become popular in France with the development of small independent stations. The compact disc, which brought improvements to audio that are perhaps comparable to those that high definition television will bring to video, has first and foremost led record publishers to give priority to their classical music lists and compilations of show-business hits.

Today, contrary to what many people believe, the trend towards catering to a mass audience has stopped; progress has not continued along the lines that might have been imagined at the end of the 1960s. The globalization which audiovisual communication makes possible has been accompanied by many innovations of a more or less interactive nature. The diversification of the supply of mass programmes, over the airwaves or by satellite, is only a stage. Already people can do their own TV programming; they can zap. In France VCRs and light camcorders constitute what amounts to an eighth channel, on which the French now spend 25 per cent of their culture and leisure budget. We are far from the electronic high mass that celebrated man's first steps on the Moon. Events like the Olympic Games that generate intense emotion all over the planet are still broadcast. But what's wrong with that? Television has grown up, reached the age when one has a few less illusions. ❐

A mysterious medium

By Jean-Claude Guillebaud

THE cultural hegemony of television, this reign of the image that extends over the entire planet, is disturbing because it is largely incomprehensible. Television's empire obeys laws that have not yet been fully grasped, and brings into play emotional mechanisms that nobody entirely masters. Rarely has any creation become so independent of its creator. Television is an explosive, hazardous instrument, an ambivalent and proliferating spirit peddling a symbolism whose meaning is uncertain. It is both all-powerful and much less mature than people imagine. The empire of television extends around the planet; but it is an empire ruled by a child.

There is something mysterious about what appears on the television screen and the "message" it sends across the world. No-one can predict precisely what signal will be transmitted to the viewer—neither the journalist, the technician, the politician sitting under the studio lights, nor the producer. The reason for this unpredictability is that the message vehicled by television does not consist exclusively of words, or reflection, or pictures, or a duplication of the real world, but of a complex mixture of all of these things—so complex, in fact, that no-one can totally control it.

A tiny gesture caught by the camera can rob an argument of its content. The unexpected impact of a single image can erase the meaning from a thousand words of commentary. The accidental drama of a live report lasting a few seconds can ignite flames of emotion in millions of homes. A moment of silence can say more than a speech. What the pitiless eye of the camera looks for is authenticity, a mysterious capacity to move or to convince, the elusive heart of the matter. This random, unpredictable quality of television is grounds for humility. Perhaps this is why it receives so little attention.

People usually tend to criticize the manipulative power of the image. The subversive genius of television, which now crosses frontiers with the aid of dish antennae, eluding all kinds of censorship, played no small part in the collapse of communism. The telefrenzy that accompanied the Gulf War further demonstrated that even in democracies public opinion could be paralyzed by a (calculated) surfeit of images.

This manipulative power explains why television is politically so important in every nation of the world. A survey has shown that in 102 countries television is directly controlled by the state. Even in the most democratic countries, the political authorities have never entirely relinquished influence over the small screen, and the "televisual landscape" is the subject of constant, though often misguided, debate.

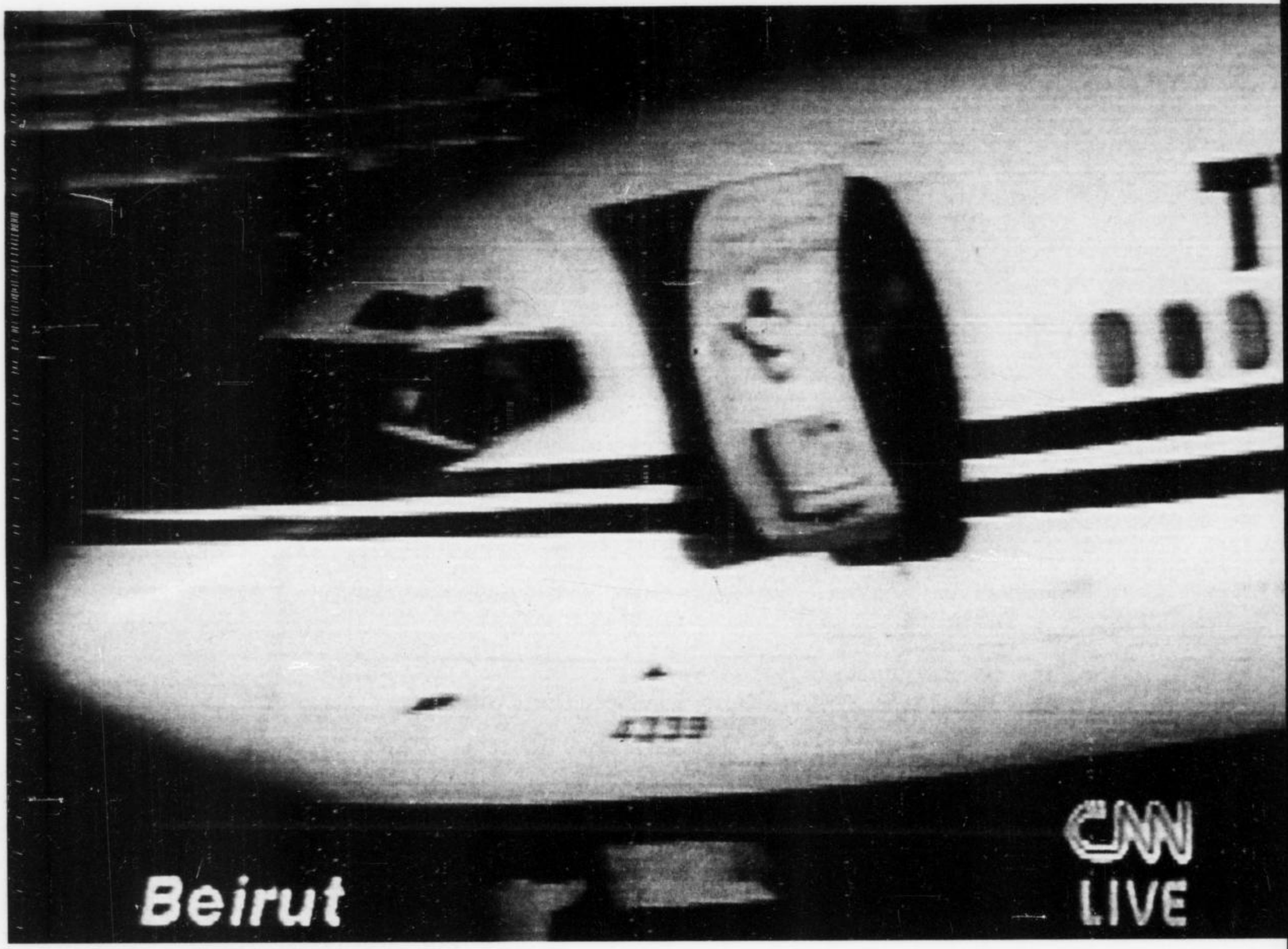
That is not all. Television has radically affected the functioning of democracy itself. It undermines the influence of intermediary bodies and representative institutions such as parliaments. It replaces, at least partly, the elective principle with the ephemeral and uncertain reign of the public opinion poll. It highlights declarations of political intent rather than political action, and encourages politicians to stage "media coups". By turning its spotlight on criminal investigation procedures, it unsettles the judicial system. The list is endless.

In all of these cases the result is the same. Representative democracy has been transformed by television. It has moved away from the principles on which it was once based and the precise mechanisms invented by its theorists, from Rousseau to de Tocqueville, from Montesquieu to Adam Smith. A new, ambiguous and only imperfectly conceptualized political model is now at work, literally before our eyes. The model is that of "media democracy", and neither constitutions nor laws have been adapted to it. Hence the widespread anxiety about television, a malaise that seems likely to be with us for some time.

It is not hard to see what is at stake. Confronted by this mysterious box that so suddenly appeared a few decades ago, we are all learning our way—on both sides of the screen. On one side techniques of manipulation are being developed and refined. On the other the viewing public is gradually learning to detect lies, to decipher the sometimes false evidence of the image and to resist the television barrage that it has for the most part passively accepted until now. A race is on between the two, and what hangs in the balance is democracy.

By a strange paradox, television, which is both futuristic and archaic, takes us back into a world of magic. We must find the right way out. ❐

JEAN-CLAUDE GUILLEBAUD writes for the French newspaper *Sud-Ouest* and the weekly *Nouvel Observateur,* and has produced a number of programmes for French television. One of his films, *Carte Orange,* won the Prix des Télévisions Francophones in 1982. His most recent books are *Le voyage à Keren* (1988), *L'accent du pays* (1990) and *Le rendez-vous d'Irkoutsk* (1990).



Current affairs

News non-stop

by Mouny Berrah

America's CNN channel, which specializes in round-the-clock international news coverage, is leading a media revolution

BEIRUT 1985. A TWA airliner has been hijacked. But another event steals the headlines. It is the coverage organized from the airport by the American television channel Cable News Network (CNN), which launches seventeen days of on-the-spot reporting, broadcast live around the clock. Relayed by five satellites, the information is picked up across the globe. The impact is worldwide. The coverage itself becomes the event.

Baghdad 1991. War has broken out. The only, tenuous connection between Iraq and the rest of the world is the voice of CNN reporter Peter Arnett, linking the field of operations to millions of homes.

Moscow 1991. CNN has the scoop of the year when it announces the resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev from his post as General Secretary of the Communist Party. But the channel's coverage of the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the demonstrations in Beijing's Tienanmen Square has already confirmed its international pre-eminence.

AN INFORMATION GIANT

CNN has built its empire on twin foundations of hard news and international reporting, both underestimated by its competitors. Nor does it neglect human-interest stories and business

Above, a hi-jack at Beirut Airport, 1985.

news, even though both these fields are targeted, and even over-exploited, by America's three major television networks, ABC, CBS and NBC. After winning awards for its reporting of the San Francisco earthquake and the stock market crash of October 1987, CNN smashed audience records with its coverage of the rescue of a child who had fallen down a well, the Smith-Kennedy rape trial and the hearings involving Judge Thomas, the candidate for the U.S. Supreme Court who was accused of sexual harassment by a former colleague.

The CNN network actually consists of two channels: CNN1, which goes out to 55 million American subscribers, and CNN Headline News, received by 35 million cabled homes. While the former puts out a bulletin every two hours, the latter has continuous transmission with two-hourly updating. Both limit their coverage to news stories, approached in a very flexible manner.

About half the organization's 2,000 journalists and technicians work at its headquarters in Atlanta. There is satellite linkage to ten regional offices and fifteen bureaux outside the United States. CNN images, transmitted by more than 200 independent stations in the United States as well as by twenty more in Asia, Europe and Latin America, feature in many news bulletins.

Nobody could deny that CNN is currently the world's largest news outfit, but the universality of its audience raises some ethical problems for subscribers and professionals alike. Its achievements in the field of the democratization of information are unquestionable. It has opened up to a large audience aspects of political and social life that were hitherto reserved for élites or specialists, and has made it possible for viewers in countries where the flow of information is controlled to hear commentary and analysis by independent journalists. The network's coverage also benefits from the editorial freedom that direct and continuous coverage of an event can provide. All these attainments, made possible by a combination of democracy and technology, help guarantee the press its status as the "fourth estate".

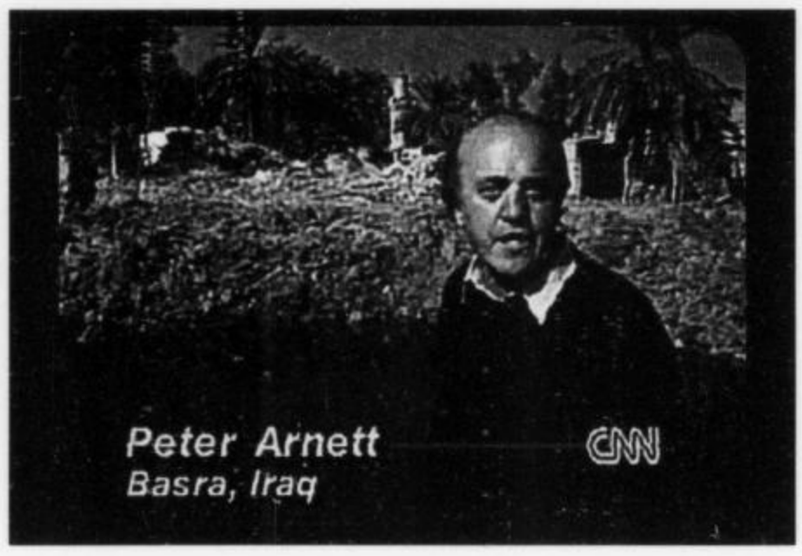
ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION

But the problems raised are on a par with CNN's global impact. The network operates in one direction only, North-South. Its broadcasters not only have the technology and the financial resources but also the last word on every subject they cover. In the developing countries, on the other hand, there is often no-one with responsibility for news-gathering. Worse still, information may be manipulated. Even when it is not taboo, press freedom is frequently no more than an abstract notion. In this context, the question of the content and objectivity of news broadcasts received from the North is overshadowed by another, more fundamental one, that of the availability of information.

Matters become more complicated if the broadcaster, caught up in the power game, decides to pass over certain facts in silence. That raises a fresh problem, for the retention of information is ultimately a form of censorship. Viewers who feel uneasy about it may react in different ways, either identifying with or rejecting the broadcaster's message.

The results are particularly upsetting since television, because of the power of the image, has established itself as the most credible of the news media, while at the same time providing ample evidence to show that it is also the most easily manipulated. It has introduced an approach to news that emphasizes speed over accuracy, and makes appearances more important than the truth. Newspaper journalists and photographers have been dragged along in television's wake, trapped by the fact that viewers, seeing the world through the lens of the small screen, forget that the field of reality shown is only a camera-frame wide—even when the

CNN images (from top): a correspondent in Moscow, 1988; demonstrators in Tienanmen Square, Beijing, 1989; riots in Los Angeles, 1992.



Left, President George Bush in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis in 1990; right, CNN reporter Peter Arnett in Basra, 1991.

scene has not in fact been set up, because of the need for speed or so as to claim a scoop.

Television has passed on its obsession with speed to the press. To meet the challenge, newspaper stories are less and less likely to be held back for want of checking. Editors are increasingly inclined to run them, accompanied by the now-classic disclaimer "According to unconfirmed reports. . . ." Television also sets a particular reporting style, favouring emotion and on-the-spot coverage over analysis and reflection. This puts pressure on the press to modify its own way of presenting the news. Nowadays many articles read like screenplays, employing verbal effects, suspense, subplots, dying falls. As a result, news reports that once had the authority of public records have become, with a few honourable exceptions, as transient as television images. Journalists are no longer dispassionate observers. Now they are witnesses, like the television camera itself.

The press has also borrowed the idea of star quality from television. More and more newspapers publish photographs of their reporters, who thereby become media figures themselves. Techniques learned from advertising have taken the place of editorial policies: the reader is subjected to a non-stop barrage of media-speak. Obliged to follow television's lead as to what the big stories are, the press increasingly tends to pass over important events whose significance is not immediately apparent, and the headlines end up by neglecting matters of considerable moment. All these linked factors lead to outrageous simplifications and the presentation of facts without any context.

THE FIVE PILLARS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The results of this process can be surprising. The world emerges portrayed in five categories, with news, politics (itself often handled in terms of human interest), the weather, business and sport featuring in varying orders of priority. Radio, the press and television all bear daily witness to this new order of things.

Paradoxically, seeing the same television images again and again can actually reduce the impact of some subjects alarmingly. Regular coverage of the developing world as menaced by overpopulation, underdevelopment, disease and intolerance ends up by creating a cliché that then becomes accepted as the truth. It is not a question of conscious and deliberate distortion on anyone's part; this image of the South simply flows naturally from a system that favours shock-value because it attracts big audiences.

If the South is shown as under threat, the North too is reflected in a distorting mirror. One only has to live in a peaceful suburb of Washington, D.C., to know just how partial and deceptive the city's image as the "capital of crime" can be—despite the fact that crimes do occur. But the misdeeds of a drug dealer or Madonna's latest publicity stunt make juicier leads for news programmes than the altruism shown by voluntary fire-fighters or the middle-class virtues of the silent majority.

But the danger is not so great for the North, which is in a position to defend itself. Contrary to the commonly-held view, American broadcasting is not a monolithic bloc, despite the dominating role of the major networks. There are masses of independent newspapers and television stations: from seventy in 1972 their numbers have now swelled to more than 300. They have a 25-per-cent audience share, and are protected by strict legislation, as well as by regulatory mechanisms befitting American society's view of the defence of liberties.

In the countries of the Third World, however, the problems inherent in the globalization of information are acute. The developing nations are unable to challenge the process either with their own media or with their perception of world affairs. It is not so much the Third World's failings as its crying needs that have been highlighted by the functioning of the world information system over the past few years. The South has responded to the dominance of CNN, whose founder sensed at the right moment that the provision of information would be the growth area of the twenty-first century, with old-fashioned debates about the role of the public and private sectors, freedom of the press and state control, freedom of expression and archaic taboos, a policy of openness or one of closed doors.

The debate on the dangers of one-way communication is still taken more seriously in the North. Here too CNN is in the front line. ❐

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Alternative television in America

by Nathalie Magnan

With the help of satellite and cable transmission, small independent programme-makers are making their voices heard

IN August 1990, American video enthusiasts who had been discontented with the media's position at the time of the armed interventions on the island of Grenada and in Panama got together to find a way of putting their point of view across in case war broke out in the Gulf. As the months went by, and conflict became inevitable, they managed to find the necessary resources to produce and broadcast a series of four half-hour programmes. The Gulf Crisis TV project was born.

As their means were limited to about $25,000, they appealed to anyone who had visual material relating to the circumstances surrounding the crisis to help them. By mid-December, they had collected some 200 videos from which they took the material for four educational programmes. Reflecting diverse points of view, the programmes sketched the historical background of the United States engagement in the Middle East and analysed the links between the oil and arms industries. They also covered the activities of pacifist groups.

The individuals in charge of the project then set their imaginations to work to find ways of getting the programmes shown. They staged mobile screenings from the back of a truck in city squares and supermarket parking lots, and copied the material onto thousands of videos that were shown in art galleries, museums and colleges, and were also passed on from hand to hand.

Finally, thanks to the backing of anti-war groups, Gulf Crisis TV's programmes were shown on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) network, which beamed them by satellite to the nation's major cities. In the first two weeks of January they attracted an audience the programme-makers could hardly have expected on such a cheap budget, coming second in the Los Angeles audience ratings. Later they were broadcast by Channel Four in the United Kingdom, and then in some fifteen other countries.

"Hand-made" television

Gulf Crisis TV did not start from scratch. It built on the ten-year experience of Paper Tiger TV, which puts out a weekly analysis of a media event such as an exhibition, a television series or an item from the written press. Starting in 1981 with an in-depth analysis of *The New York Times*, Paper Tiger has since put together more than 400 broadcasts on subjects as diverse as the passionate reactions to the TV series *Dynasty*, and media treatment of the Baby M case, in which a surrogate mother refused to hand over her child to the prospective parents.

Paper Tiger is one of 200 weekly series transmitted by New York's public cable television, which is reserved for local productions and whose only selection criterion is "First come, first served". As a result, Paper Tiger is transmitted along with programmes on astrology and broadcasts for teenagers, ethnic minorities, women's organizations and the Boy Scouts of America.

On schedule each week, the attention of channel-hoppers is caught by the programme's unusual set, painted in comic-strip style. The broadcast goes out live, since the "Tigers"—artists, film editors, critics, teachers and students of television, all of them unpaid—have neither the time, energy or money to put it out later in a taped version. It is "hand-made" television, incorporating long shots of the studio so as to demystify the process of production. The low cost of the programme is indicated in the credits; it rarely comes to more than $300. Financial backing comes mainly from public subsidies, but as the backlist of programmes grows, video rental is gradually becoming more important.

High tech and cheap video

The Gulf Crisis TV Project also drew on the experience of Deep Dish, a group that for the past five years has been distributing the work of independent directors in the United States and Canada. A central computer selects representative segments from their videos and assembles them into a series of short, thirty-minute films on such subjects as ecology, Aids, censorship or civil rights. The titles of the videos are listed in the closing credits alongside the names and addresses of their distributors, and a complete catalogue is available on request. Beamed up to a satellite, the programmes are then picked up by public broadcasting channels and universities. So high technology links up with low-budget video to make more voices heard and to nourish the multicultural trend that emerged in the United States in the 1980s.

By their methods of production and distribution, these experiments in alternative television hold out the prospect of a more accessible media horizon, opening not on some Orwellian vision of a global village but instead on a kind of democracy of the image in which people can decide for themselves how they are represented in the media. ❐

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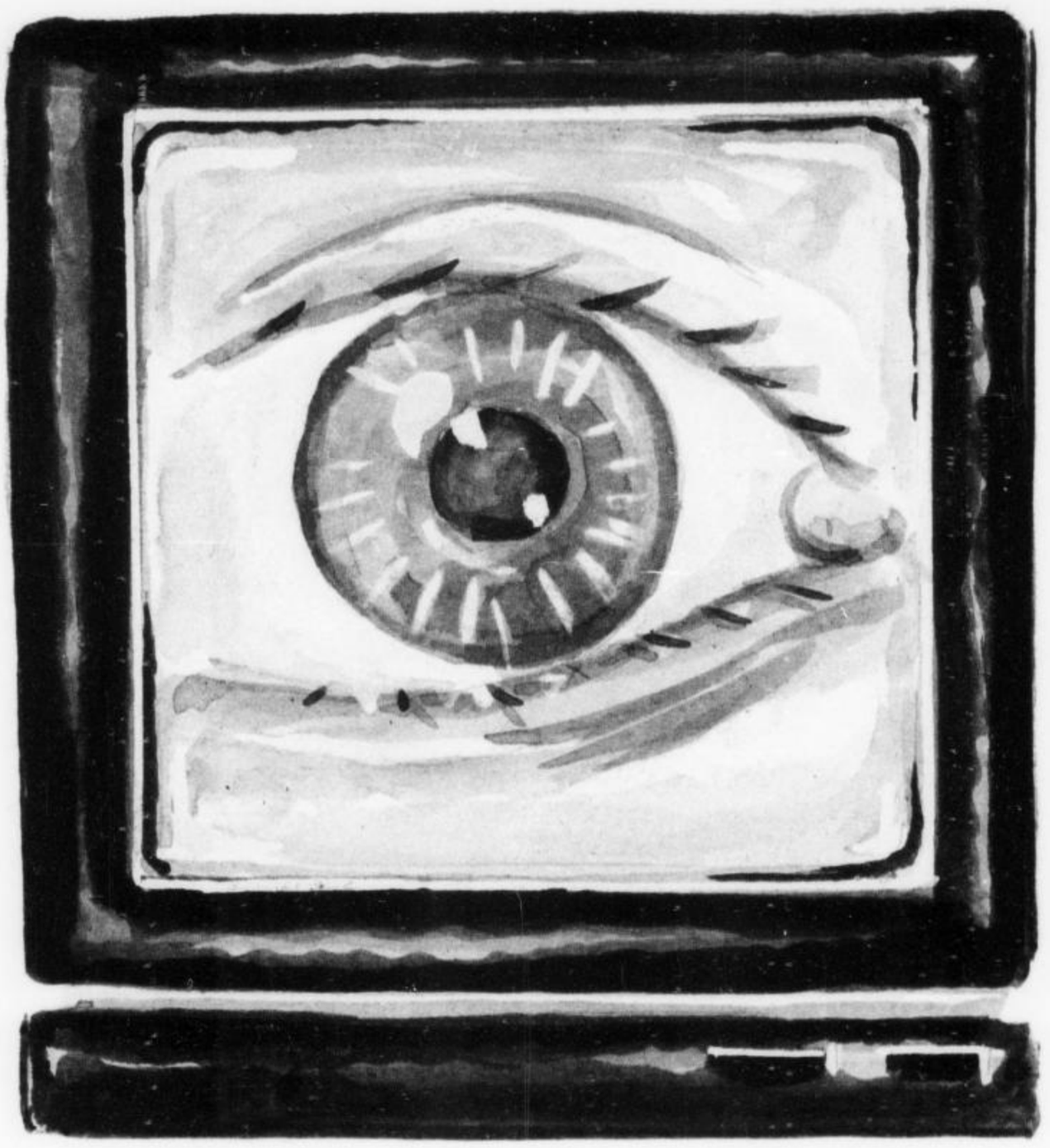
Human interest

This is their life

by Justine Boissard



'Reality shows' attract big audiences by putting ordinary people in the spotlight

ON the set of *L'Amour en danger,* a programme broadcast by France's TF1 channel, Danielle and Alain unashamedly reveal their sexual and marital problems. A psychoanalyst helps them understand why their relationship is not working.

On the same channel, a reunion takes place on *Perdu de vue,* a programme in which viewers phone in to help someone in the studio trace a missing person. After thirty-six years of separation, Josiane is reunited with her father. Tearfully she declares that the programme has given her the best day of her life.

La nuit des héros, on the A2 channel, tells stories with happy endings. Everyman becomes a hero in the shape of Michel, a young man who saved his young brother from the flames.

On television screens all over the world, similar programmes, somewhere between documentary and fiction, feature human dramas, anguished couples, families torn apart. They use some of the techniques of documentary investigations, with interviews playing an important role. The facts are recounted by a journalist, relived by the protagonists or staged by actors. Emotion on camera is the one ingredient all the shows have in common.

The "reality show" was born in the United States as the brainchild of local TV stations eager to compete with the national networks which, noting their success, proceeded to take over the genre. NBC was the first off the mark, with *Missing Persons,* which set out to trace people who had disappeared. CBS followed up with *Rescue 911,* the big brother of *La nuit des héros.* In *America's Most Wanted,* no longer on the air, viewers were invited to help find a criminal on the run. Today's star programme is *Studs,* in which men are confronted with girls they have seduced, who have to answer indiscreet questions put to them by the host, inventor of the reality smut show.

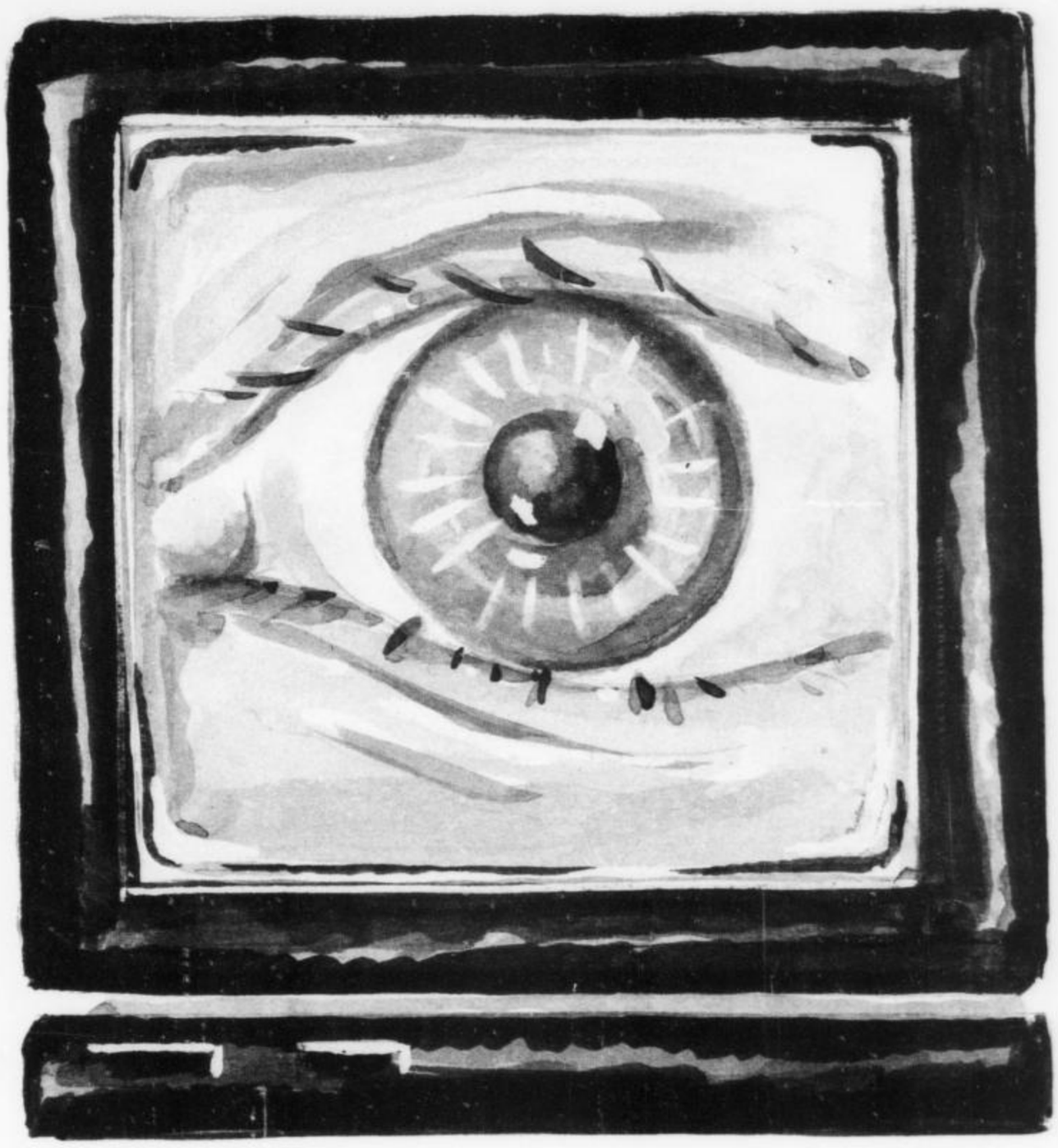
In Europe, the Italian show *Chi l'ha visto,* on the RAI3 channel, seeks to trace runaway wives, husbands or children or lost loves. In Britain, BBC2's *Crimewatch UK* asks viewers to help track criminals or witnesses.

What all these programmes have in common is low costs and big audiences—a winning formula that attracts 100 million regular viewers in the United States alone, providing seven of the top ten prime-time shows. Reality shows have also hit the jackpot in France, where six of them were launched within six months. *Perdu de vue* reaches almost 30 per cent of the prime-time audience.

VOYEURISM TRIUMPHANT

More than just audience-pullers, reality shows have become a social phenomenon. People discuss them everywhere, and also question their role, for they arouse strong feelings. Intellectuals, journalists and critics can hardly find terms strong enough to express their distaste. "Garbage", "voyeurism", "pick-up shows" and "smear television" are among the phrases that have been used.

In France the viewers' association known as



***Eyeball to Eyeball* (1992), a drawing by Villoria.**

"Les pieds dans le PAF"[1]. is a particularly severe critic of reality shows. What worries us," says Stéphane Pocrain, the association's vice-president, "is the way in which emotion and distress are used for purely commercial ends." The shows cover real social problems such as Aids, unemployment, insecurity and marital problems. "But they only skim over the problems," he adds. "All that matters is the emotion, which guarantees good viewing figures. The shows are staged so that the dramatic intensity steadily increases to the point at which the individual in front of the cameras, whether he or she is an Aids victim or someone looking for a close relative, bursts into tears. There's invariably an advertising break immediately afterwards."

In the association's view the overwhelming importance attached to emotion leads to all sorts of chicanery. "With the reality shows, voyeurism is in control. Viewers see a production full of drama and sentiment. But they are duped. The emotion is faked, because when the programmes are recorded in advance only the high spots are kept for transmission."

Another danger is the threat of smears, unsubstantiated accusations and the settling of scores perpetrated under the pretext of the search for lost loved ones.

The producers of these programmes band together in face of their detractors. Bernard Bouthier of TF1 insists, "We haven't gone too far. Thanks to careful checking, there have been no false witnesses on *Perdu de vue*. There is a high-minded élite that criticizes our shows in principle, but can't find anything concrete to attack us with."

When they are accused of profiting from emotional turmoil and tear-jerking, the producers protest. "Viewers recognize themselves in our programmes," Bouthier explains. "When we present couples' problems or trace a loved one, the viewers feel involved. They're not voyeurs, because they are sharing the emotion of the participants. Nobody complained of tear-jerking when Serge Gainsbourg talked about his sexual conquests or when Michael Jackson's sister revealed that her father had raped her. But when ordinary people are involved, suddenly it's a scandal."

'Don't forget *me*!'

The reality shows are television-as-neighbour, prying into the most intimate corners of people's lives. This confessional branch of broadcasting has emerged at a time when "the stars make people dream less and less," explains sociologist Gilles Lipovetski. "Big shows with glitter and fake jewellery have become so commonplace that they have lost much of their old fascination. As for fiction series, they are too academic or just too repetitive." The reality shows, on the other hand, "touch the heart-strings of the millions." Lipovetski claims that they are more unpredictable and so generate stronger emotion. "Reality outdoes fiction."

The programmes allow anyone to get on the

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air, and that is doubtless the secret of their success. "There's a process of identification and involvement," notes Philippe Plaisance of *La nuit des héros.* "In an individualistic society like ours, it's a way for everyone to say 'Don't forget *me*'."

In Gilles Lipovetski's view, "This type of programme would not have been possible a few years ago. In 1968 people wouldn't have been interested in reality shows because they thought politics could solve all social problems. Today, with the crisis of ideologies, there is a return to the values of listening and helping one another, to a certain morality." Television seems to be playing a new role as a kind of fairy godmother.

The producers of *Perdu de vue* receive more than 2,000 letters a month. "People write to us because they don't know who else to turn to," says Bernard Bouthier. "And most of the couples that appear on *L'amour en danger* have never dared to consult a psychotherapist. They are more scared of specialists than of television."

"It may not be Lourdes, but it has helped me to discover how much my husband needs me," says Florence, one participant in the show. "TF1 surrounded me like a family." People who take part feel they are really being listened to. In exchange, they make their story public property.

But television is interested in people and prides itself on doing a good job. Before and after the show, there are frequent discussions between the programme-makers and those taking part. *Perdu de vue* solves about thirty cases a week, including some that never get on the air. "People think we are more Machiavellian than we are," Bernard Bouthier claims. "Actually we are providers of social hygiene."

On *Perdu de vue* on France's TF1 channel, a young woman is reunited with her father after 20 years' separation.

As mediator and healer, television is currently trying to get closer to people, as is shown by the success of the televised charity appeals known as telethons. Viewers express a desire for co-operation, solidarity and compassion merely by switching on their sets. Viewing becomes a noble deed and ordinary people become stars. In *La nuit des héros,* a volunteer, filmed on location, undergoes various sporting trials with the audience's encouragement so as to win 100,000 francs for charity.

Television is already omnipresent. Is it likely to become omnipotent? How far can the cameras go in exalting civic virtue and viewers' generosity without doing harm?

And what about *Mea culpa,* one of the newest French reality shows, which has taken on the noble but perilous task of enabling victims to confront their repentant persecutors so that each side ceases to feel hatred? In one programme, the parents of a little boy called Yann who had died of Aids met other people from their village, Grez Neuville, who had rejected the sick child, thereby causing great suffering to the family. Now the neighbours came to confess their error. They went away disappointed after the programme. "We felt we had been tricked," the mayoress claimed. "We came across almost as savages, as scum. Now we're getting hate mail." The production team of Bernard Bouthier and Pascal Breugnot has since made its own *mea culpa,* recognizing that the programme had not been adequately prepared.

As for *Perdu de vue,* they insist that "We're no substitute for the police or the judiciary. We do everything with the consent of the people involved, we don't run the risk of disappointing people. If the person we are looking for does not want to contact his or her relatives, we give up. And we double-check the information we receive."

Are reality shows introducing a new kind of humanitarian activism? The role played by the emergency relief organization *Médecins du monde* in one sequence of *Perdu de vue,* in which representatives of the organization act as a link between viewers and people who are looking for a job or a place to live, is noteworthy in this respect. But for every case that is settled, how many appeals for help go unanswered?

Reality shows have introduced a new type of television, in which everyday life becomes a piece of real-life fiction. By voluntarily revealing their secrets over the airwaves, anyone can become a star for as long as the programme is on the air. Everyman and Everywoman get a chance to have their day. Viewers listen to what they have to say sympathetically, because it often echoes their own experience. Tomorrow it could be their turn to be in the limelight. ❐

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1. PAF = *Paysage audiovisuel français* (French audiovisual landscape).

The cartoon boom

Animation

by Béatrice Cormier-Rodier and Béatrice Fleury-Vilatte

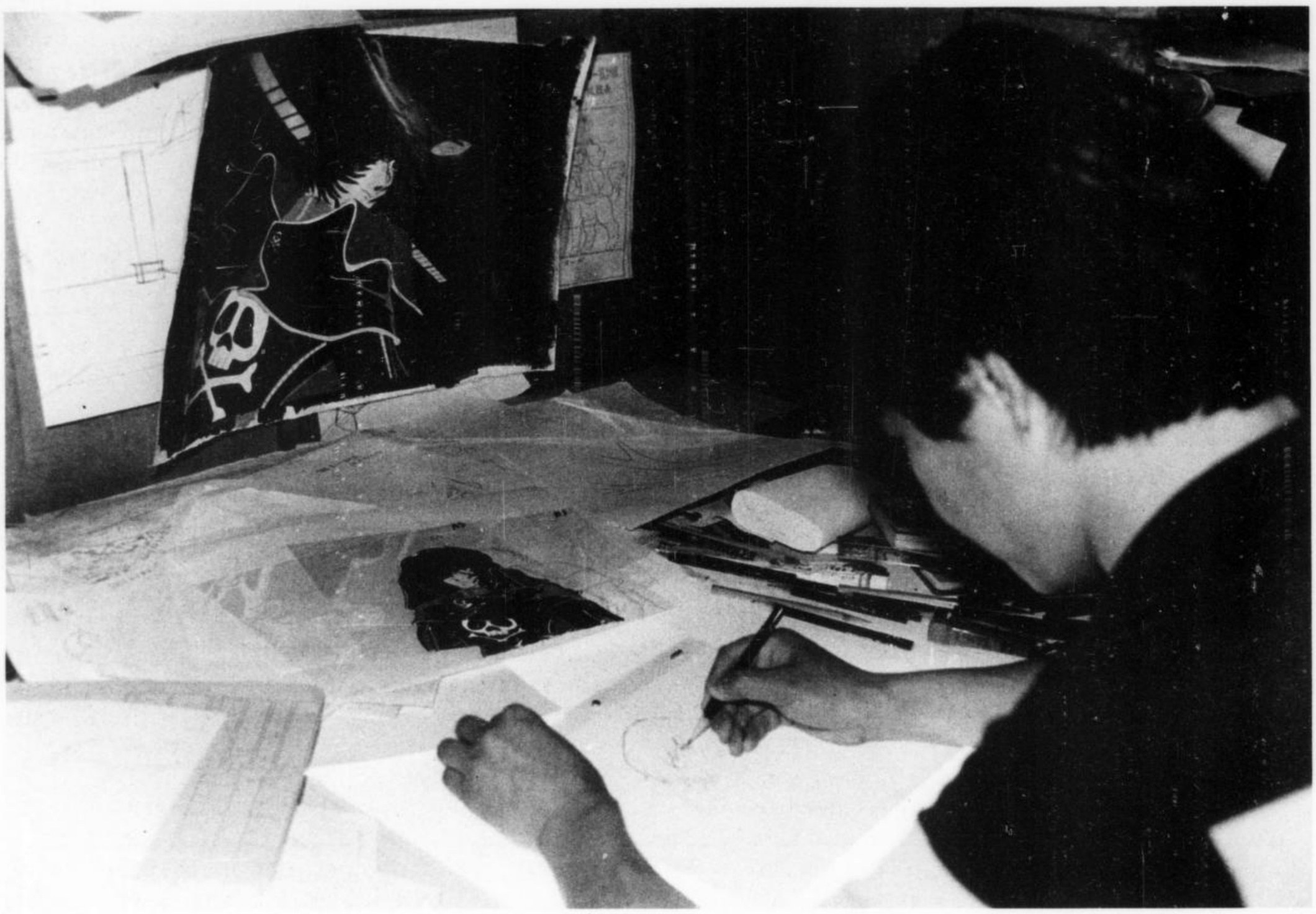
Japanese animated cartoons have won a worldwide market. What is the secret of their success?

THE Japanese animation industry has vast financial resources. The foundations of its wealth were laid in the 1950s with the setting up of production companies whose goal was to make "the most screen hours for the least money". Ever since those early days, companies such as Toei Animation and Tokyo Movie have had a meticulous and inexpensive workforce that has enabled them to produce material at competitive prices.

At the same time a skilful marketing strategy, working to a model similar to that of the American market, was established, linking animation, advertising and the sale of spin-off products such as toys, articles of clothing, badges and books. Specialized boutiques opened up in Japan's big cities to sell products inspired by stories and characters from popular cartoons. Since 1987, the sale of videos of the most successful television series has further boosted the market.

Television made a big contribution to the development of mass-market animated cartoon films. *Astro Boy (Tetsuwar Atomu)* was the first series to be broadcast on Japanese television. Inspired by *Shonen,* a children's magazine, it told the story of a robot child and his family who defend peace by fighting the forces of evil. Produced by Osamu Tezuka and his firm Mushi Production, it introduced a "limited-animation" technique that saved considerable time and money at the price of slowing down the flow of images—a feature of Japanese cartoons that has since attracted much criticism. Nonetheless, the success of *Astro Boy,* which from the start attracted a 30 per

Above, the intergalactic robot Grandizer.



In a Japanese film studio, a designer sketches frames for a cartoon featuring Captain Harlock.

cent audience rating, whetted the appetite of both producers and the public for television series.

In the first rush of enthusiasm, *Ace, Space Boy, Man of Steel No. 28, Ken, the Wolf Boy* and *Emperor of the Jungle* went into production. In February 1963 there were forty-two weekly cartoon series on Japanese television; in 1965 there were sixty-one. Currently Japanese television programmes forty-five hours and forty minutes of animated cartoons per week.

The conquest of Europe in the mid-1970s was an easy matter. Efficient and profitable, the Japanese companies met little opposition. *Grandizer* (Goldorak) was enormously successful with children. Its hero, an ingenious adventurer from another world who leaped onto fantastic machines to help the helpless, enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with a robot that could change shape at his command. In combat, the two became indistinguishable, forming a single war machine.

Internationalizing form and content

In addition to science fiction and adventure series, two new genres were established. There were sentimental series such as *Heidi* and *Candy,* and series on sporting themes, such as *Olive and Tom, A New Life,* and *Attack No. 1.*

By now Japanese animated cartoons had, to improve their sales prospects, increasingly to appeal to viewers of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. To universalize the attractions of their heroes, the physical characteristics and lifestyles of the characters were therefore defined with less precision. In the 1970s, Osamu Tezuka introduced a graphic style that removed all specifically Oriental characteristics from the appearance of the characters. Ever since, Japanese animated cartoons have featured huge-eyed heroes with flowing manes of blonde or brown hair.

A similar taste for Western characters is also perceptible in advertising and the cinema, and has even led some actors to undergo cosmetic surgery. Some animated cartoons such as *Gu Gu Ganmo* carry the attitude to excess by giving stupid or unpleasant characters Oriental features. Financial considerations encourage the process, since the same characters are often used in more than one film, with little more than a moustache added or removed, or a change of hairstyle or clothing.

Heroines may be blonde (as in *Candy*), redheaded like Tony in *Reporter's Blues* or Julie in *Daddy Longlegs,* brunettes as in *Julie, I Love You,* or even given flowing blue tresses, as in *Creamy* and *Sally the Witch.* Their eyes are deep blue or green, and their lifestyle is indistinguishable from that of young European or American women. Their behaviour is thereby

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neatly adapted to Western standards—and so to the international market—without transgressing Japanese social norms. The Westernization of cartoon characters thus provides a kind of cultural alibi, even within Japan itself.

The heroines of these series are often inspired by Western literature. Candy calls Heidi to mind, Princess Sarah draws on the French fairy-tale *Peau d'âne,* Nadia could be Captain Nemo's daughter and spiritual heir. Some of the stories even take place abroad: *Candy* is set in the United States, *Reporter's Blues* and *Daddy Longlegs* in France. In *The Little Chef* characters try out foreign dishes, and the heroes of *Olive and Tom* travel to Europe to meet the local football teams.

CHILDREN'S FAVOURITES

The films' subject-matter is very diverse, drawing on the world of children everywhere. For example, the animal citizens of Maple Town in *Maple Town Story,* with a family to represent each species, call to mind children's relationships with their parents and with each other. In each episode young viewers are constantly encouraged to identify with the characters. These programmes have affinities with such European productions as *Petit Ours brun.*

Candy was launched in France in 1979, opening the way for a succession of altruistic heroines given to sacrificing themselves for others. *Gorgie, Princesse Saphir, Hello Sandybell* and *Nadia* all draw on familiar and well-loved children's storylines. Like Candy, the eponymous heroines of the latter two series are orphans. The other characters in the cartoons may be protective or threatening, but they do not exist outside their relationship with the heroine.

Each episode follows a set pattern: the social order is first threatened or disturbed, and then re-established. The main character always has a mission—helping someone or other, preventing a wrong or finding the person who committed it. The other characters are good or bad insofar as they help or hinder her in the performance of her duty. Devoted to helping the weak and promoting the good of society as a whole, she eventually overcomes all obstacles, and adventure and suspense, laughter and tears pave the way to the obligatory happy ending.

Japanese producers have not merely drawn on the plotlines of children's literature: they have also adapted many of its greatest successes, including *Pinocchio, Les Misérables, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Alice in Wonderland* and the French classic *Sans famille.* The series are very long and not always faithful to the original texts, though the decor and historical reconstruction are normally carefully researched. These adaptations offer children not just storylines of the type described above,

Candy dolls, which sell in their millions in Tokyo, are one of many spin-off products inspired by Japanese animation films.

but also a chance to rediscover on screen whatever peoples their imagination and increases their pleasure in life—fairies and witches, handsome princes and talking animals.

A SHIFT FROM VIOLENCE TO HUMOUR

Yet Japanese animated cartoons can be controversial, too. From *Grandizer* to *St. Seiya* by way of *Masters of the Universe, Dragon Ball Z, Ken the Greät Bear Fist, Captain Harlock* and *Bioman,* they have been criticized for excessive violence and limited educational value. It is certainly true that they *are* often violent, not just in their plots but in their casts of grim-faced heroes, horned monsters and robots. The effect is heightened by a style of production involving fast-changing images, loud sound effects and aggressive colours and lighting. The violence was initially all the more shocking for its realism, which contrasted with the comic aggressivity of Micky Mouse and Tom and Jerry cartoons, and it was so gratuitous that it sometimes even got in the way of plot development.

But although this kind of violence had considerable viewer appeal until the mid-1980s, it no longer plays much of a part. Ever since *Grandizer,* energy, technology and adventure have taken its place. To different degrees, the newer cartoons promote the use of technology to enable humankind to defend the planet against evil forces. Remorselessly optimistic in spirit, they invite children to identify with heroes who are indestructible.

Yet there are also signs of a growing taste for gentler plotlines. Today's children prefer comical heroes to the supermen beloved of their elders. The series shown in France as *Un collège fou, fou, fou* was enormously successful in Japan, perhaps because it gave children the opportunity to relieve through laughter some of the anxieties caused by a particularly demanding educational system. In *Nicky Larsen,* the humour is of a different kind, a mixture of sensuality and clowning. The main character, a private detective in search of clients, is an anti-hero whose constant struggles with his own libido often make him ridiculous.

The vogue for sports series was launched by *Attack No. 1* and *Jeanne and Serge*. These programmes depict sport as more than just a pastime. They glorify assertive individuals, and also extol group membership in the shape of team sport.

Sport is depicted as symbolizing confrontation and combat, testing an individual's tenacity and will-power and his capacity to push himself to the limit. In sport nothing can ever be taken for granted, and the winner must always be ready to defend his or her position. In a sense these series could be said to have some educational value in preparing children for life. The lesson they teach is that it is no longer enough simply to be kind and decent, as Walt Disney cartoons might suggest. To win a place in the adult world youngsters must do more than just pass the tests that arise in childhood. They must be winners, they must know how to manage their lives, take risks and create opportunities. They must be fighters and learn to think like winners. By depicting competition and glorifying the hero who rises above the crowd, these series present an image of individuals creating themselves in a context of equality and justice.

There is nothing wrong with wanting to encourage children to be winners, but to imply that this is the only way to find one's bearings in life and to define one's social identity is more questionable. In most of these stories the message comes over particularly sharply because parents tend to be absent, and the children are responsible for their own lives. The stress on competition and team spirit blurs the difference between happiness and social success.

But this view of happiness is not presented in series like *Candy, Nadia* and *Hello Sandybell,* and in the many adaptations of stories that highlight more altruistic ideals. Japan's output of animated cartoons is nothing if not diverse, and this diversity may be its greatest strength. ❐

Characters from a popular Japanese TV cartoon series.

GREENWATCH

THE UNESCO COURIER - OCTOBER 1992

EDITORIAL

A long-term threat

by France Bequette

THE greenhouse effect has some points in its favour, according to a recent report on the subject from the French Academy of Sciences. As the report points out, it is thanks to the greenhouse effect that water exists in liquid form on the surface of the Earth, a phenomenon which has helped to make the planet inhabitable. But as Mostafa Tolba, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has noted: "During the 300 years of the industrial and agricultural revolutions, man began to replace nature as the motor of climatic change." During that period, concentrations in the atmosphere of some of the so-called greenhouse gases constantly increased: there was, for example, a 25 per cent increase in carbon dioxide (0.5 per cent per year), and over 50 per cent in methane (0.9 per cent per year). These figures may seem insignificant, but while methane remains in the atmosphere for ten years, it is estimated that carbon dioxide stays there for 50 to 200 years. We have now inherited a situation "which presents a serious enough long-term threat (within one century) to warrant prevention and adjustment measures which call for extreme vigilance." Experts on the Earth's atmosphere are warning the insatiable energy-consumers that we are that we must save energy and press for the development of renewable energies such as wind and solar power. ■

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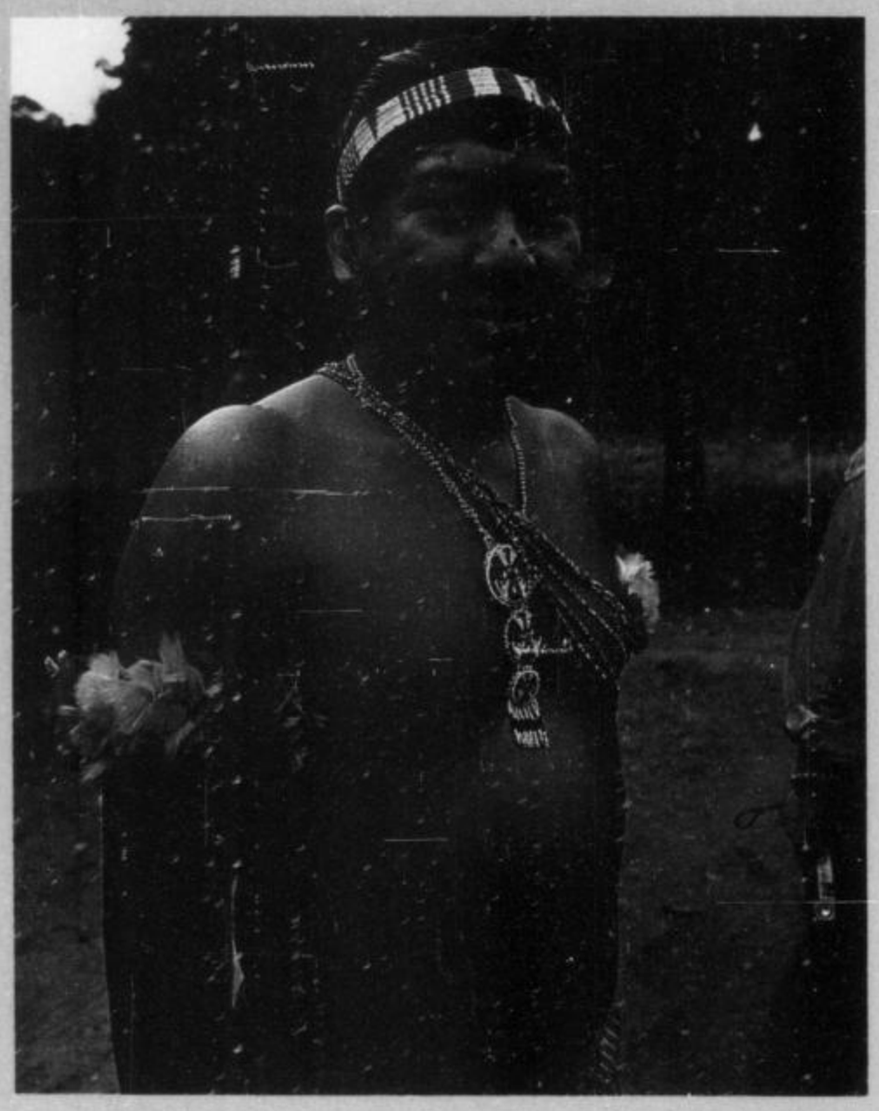
SHRINKING FARMLAND

In 1970, 0.64 hectares of arable land were theoretically available per inhabitant in the developed countries, as opposed to 0.28 in the developing world. In 1990, the figure declined to 0.56 hectares, for the rich but plunged to 0.20 for the poor. The reason is that urban areas in the developing countries will more than double in size between 1980 and the end of the century, rising from 8 million to 17 million hectares. Rural depopulation is also leaving land fallow. At least 0.60 hectares of arable land is necessary to feed one person using traditional farming methods, so that these methods are no longer meeting current needs. One piece of good news, however, is that between 1970 and 1990, cereal production increased by 15 per cent in developing countries and by 32 per cent in industrialized countries. (Source: *Earth Audit*, a document published in five languages by UNEP in January, 1992). ■

LAND FOR THE YANOMAMI



The Yanomami Indians of Brazil have just been granted 94,000 square kilometres of reserve land—an area three times the size of Belgium—following an order signed last year on 14 November. This brings the total area of land that has been turned over to the country's 200,000 Indians up to 800,000 square kilometres. ■

THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD OF SEASONS

Autumn rains, bird migration, commercial and leisure fishing, wine and olive cultivation, and forest fires are among the themes explored by *Mediterrania*, a weekly TV documentary series presenting the "seasonal diary" of the Mediterranean ecosystems. *Mediterranea* is an educational project being carried out by the Spanish Committee of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme. The series is broadcast by Televisió de Catalunya, a Barcelona public television channel which airs 100 hours a week in Catalan. ■

SWITZERLAND RECYCLES BATTERIES

Since 1985, Swiss shop-keepers have been required to take back used batteries, which may not be thrown away in garbage dumps. But so far much of the 3,500 tonnes of batteries the country discards each year has been dumped in neighbouring countries. A few months ago, a plant, the first of its kind in Europe, was established to incinerate 2,000 tonnes of batteries per year, thereby reducing their mercury, zinc and ferromanganese content to less than 10 tonnes of vitrifiable slag. Shareholders in the company that commissioned the plant include the Swiss Post Office and railways, the city of Zürich, Migros (a supermarket chain which is closely involved in environmental protection) and a number of private businesses. ■

OF WHALES AND WARSHIPS

Although some whaling is authorized for "scientific research", commercial whaling is still subject to a moratorium. Meanwhile, mass strandings of whales on beaches continue to occur. One explanation which is currently being advanced for this phenomenon is that sonar equipment used during military manœuvres may be scrambling the cetaceans' sonar orientation capabilities. ■

BACK TO BIKES

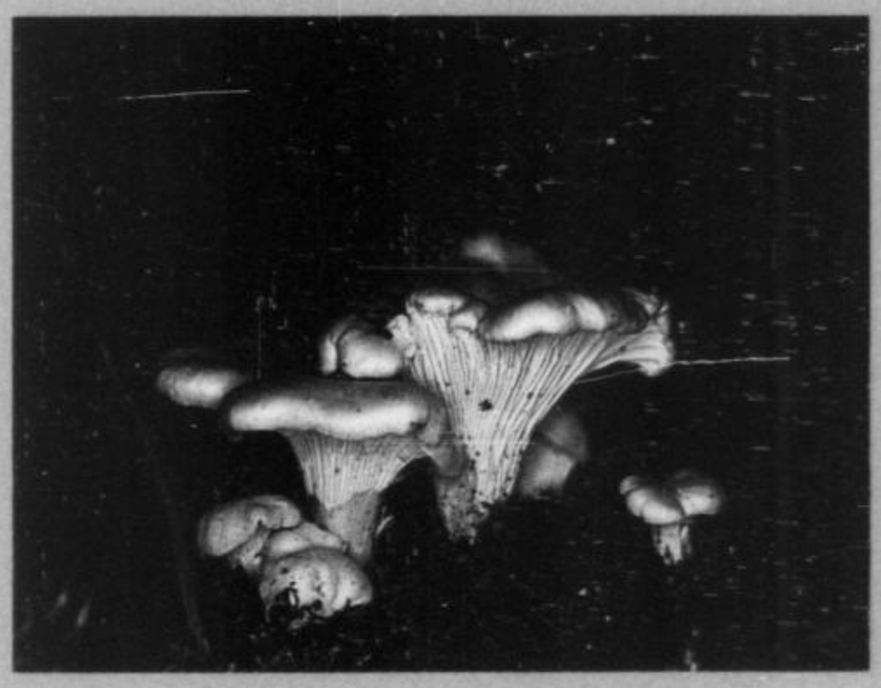
The best way to avoid the traffic jams that clog the world's megacities is to promote the use of non-motorized vehicles. Michael Replogle, a consultant to the World Bank and the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, hopes that governments will take prompt action on this issue. Asia has more than 400 million bicycle owners, and in India, for instance, 30 to 50 per cent of the vehicles on the main city thoroughfares are bicycles. ■

MUSHROOMS ARE LOSING GROUND

In northern Europe and in the United States, the number of species of edible and non-edible mushrooms, the total numbers of mushrooms and the average weight of individual mushrooms are all declining. Mushrooms are closely linked to trees, with which they exchange water and mineral salts for glucides (carbohydrate compounds), and their diminishing numbers represent a serious threat to forests. The likely culprit is air pollution, particularly that linked to nitrogen-based fertilizers. ■

CLEANING UP WARFARE?

The adoption in 1977 of Protocol I as an addition to the 1949 Geneva Conventions resulted from a determination to protect the environment in wartime. Article 35 of the Protocol reads that in case of armed conflict, "It is prohibited, to employ methods or means of warfare which are intended, or may be expected to cause widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment." Article 55 states that "Care shall be taken in warfare to protect the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage.... "What refreshing optimism! ■



Dossier

HOW CLEAN IS NUCLEAR ENERGY?

by France Bequette

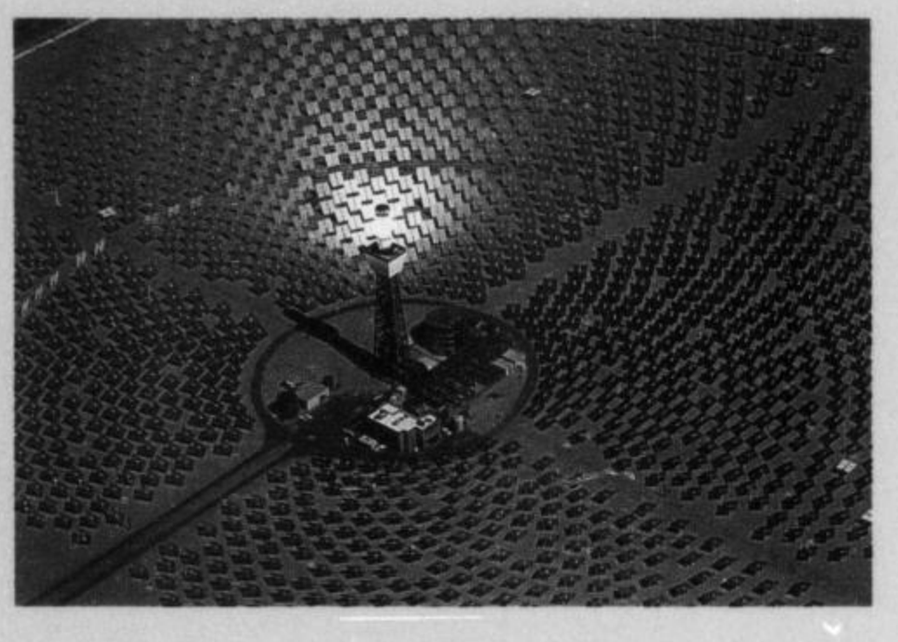
THE very word "nuclear" tends to give people the shivers. It brings up memories of the atomic bomb and the tragedy of Hiroshima. Since 1986, it has also been associated with the Chernobyl disaster. Because nuclear power was first used for military purposes, it was long surrounded by an atmosphere of secrecy which hampered communication about its civilian applications. To counter the negative image of nuclear energy, authorities promoted it as "clean", and were later at a loss when attention was drawn to the growing problem of nuclear waste. Environmentalists became extremely alarmed and staged violent demonstrations whenever the construction of a nuclear plant was announced. Despite their protests, 530 plants have been built worldwide, 112 in the United States, 57 in France and 46 in the former Soviet Union (the planet's three most "nuclear" countries). In addition, 84 more plants are under construction or at the planning stage and 17 have been ordered. It is therefore important to know whether this type of energy is compatible with the quality of life we expect from the future.

Energy generation and consumption have become indicators of development and symbols of prosperity. In order to run factories and cars, and to light and heat houses, we have coal, gas and oil, the so-called non-renewable fossil fuels. Dams are used to produce hydro-electricity. The use of firewood to produce energy has practically disappeared, except in the poorest countries.

According to figures provided by the French Atomic Energy Commission, humankind is thought to have used 350 billion tonnes of coal equivalent between 1850 and 1970. Taking into account the constant increase in consumption, projections indicate that coal reserves are sufficient for another 300 years. The projections for natural gas and oil are shorter—a mere 50 years. To get an idea of our appetite for energy, it is instructive to consider that, if energy consumed by humankind during the Roman empire is represented by a factor of 1, the equivalent figure for the early 1800s would be 3; today it would be 500. And demand is constantly increasing. In France, for instance, about 11 million families own one car, and more than 4.5 million have two or more.

After the two "oil shocks" of 1973 and 1979, there was a noticeable—but short-lived—reduction in energy demand. According to a recent report on the greenhouse effect and its climatic consequences produced by the French Academy of Sciences, "Since the turn of the century, world economic activity has increased twentyfold. Industrial production has increased 50 times and the consumption of fossil fuels by 30.... The expected doubling of world population in the next 50 years should have a much higher multiplier effect on economic activity. World production will have to increase between five and ten times to meet the legitimate needs and aspirations of the Earth's 10 billion inhabitants. This might seem to be economic expansion on a colossal scale—and indeed it is. Yet it is nothing more than the expression of a continuing annual economic growth rate of 3.2 to 4.7 per cent, which is barely enough to reduce the level of poverty in the Third World."

Energy production often involves a breakdown of matter, emitting potentially toxic gases or producing solid wastes. Ever since the scientific community began to study the greenhouse effect, combustion producing carbon dioxide (CO_2) has been under attack. The CO_2 emitted into the atmosphere absorbs solar radiation and traps it, like the windows of a greenhouse, increasing the surface temperature of the Earth. CO_2 is not the only greenhouse gas. Methane, low altitude ozone, nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) all contribute to the greenhouse effect. The consequence of the greenhouse effect, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), could be a 1.5° to 4°C rise in the temperature of the planet, leading to climatic changes and higher ocean levels.



A solar power plant in California (U.S.A.).

One way of combatting the greenhouse effect is to reduce fossil fuel combustion. This is an important point in the case made by defenders of nuclear energy. They claim that, at least from a strictly environmental point of view, a nuclear plant is clean, in the sense that it emits no greenhouse gases. The French electric utility, Électricité de France, points out that "Since 1980, whereas electricity consumption increased by 50 per cent, the substitution of nuclear energy for coal and fuel has made it possible to reduce CO_2 emissions by 40 per cent, NOx emissions by 75 per cent and SO_2 emissions by 70 per cent". The French Academy of Sciences quotes a May 1990 report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and UNEP, which states that greenhouse-gas emissions would have to be reduced by at least 50 per cent to stabilize atmospheric concentrations at their 1985 levels. In principle, this is possible: "If all the industrialized countries (OECD and East-European countries) had the same energy efficiency rate (Gross Domestic Product/final energy consumption) and the same proportion of nuclear power in their energy production mix as France, global CO_2 emissions would be less than 40 per cent of what they are today." In tonnes of carbon consumed per inhabitant per year, comparative emissions for the following countries or regions are: France and Japan, 1.9; United Kingdom, 2.8; Germany, 3.2; Eastern

Europe, close to 4; United States, more than 5.

Does this mean that the "all nuclear" energy option should be promoted? Although this is sometimes recommended, as a solution "it would run up against obstacles both financial (because of the capital intensive nature of electricity produced by nuclear power), and socio-political: reservations about nuclear energy have not disappeared, and the considerable impact of the Chernobyl accident invites caution."

The Swedish example is significant here. Sweden's 12 nuclear plants provided 45.9 per cent of the country's electricity in 1990, and 51.6 per cent in 1991. In 1980, after a referendum, the Swedish parliament declared a moratorium, under which all plants would be phased out within 30 years, that is, by 2010. When the first two groups of plants are closed, the country will have an energy shortfall of three billion KwH, and energy conservation will not be to make up the difference. By the time all the plants are closed, the figure will be 66 billion KwH. Noted for their respect for the environment, the Swedes only accept natural gas and hydro-electric power, and even here problems arise because public opinion opposes the construction of dams on the last important unspoiled sites. Natural gas combustion emits CO_2 and methane.

Switzerland provides another illustration of the dilemma. Engineers proposing to dig out a second conduit for the Grande Dixence dam in the Valais canton are being opposed by representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), who are worried about what will happen to the mass of rocks extracted from the hole.

The problem of waste

So, is nuclear power the answer? It's not that simple. For one thing, various public and private organizations have found that radioactivity around nuclear plants has increased, officially by 1 per cent. Furthermore, environmentalists claim that there has been a radioactive build-up in the food chain from plankton to big fish due to the liquid emissions from nuclear plants. Furthermore, the transportation of uranium ore and its transformation into fuel are risky.

The most serious question raised, however, has to do with nuclear wastes. These are of three kinds. Type A, of considerable volume but only mildly radioactive, includes the gloves and the lab-coats of plant, hospital and laboratory employees, filters, mud and tools. It is "short-lived", which means it must be monitored for 300 years. Type B is material contaminated through contact with nuclear fuel. It will be radioactive for some 10,000 to 20,000 years. Type C is the most dangerous; it includes material such as neptunium, which remains radioactive for a million years.

What should be done with nuclear waste? According to geologist Claude Guillemin, a correponding member of the French Academy of Sciences, type A waste does not present any problem: "We geologists work in the very long term and feel we must take responsibility for the distant future. Soulaines (in the Aube department in France) is an ideal spot. A land-locked island, it is isolated, observed and protected, and sits on a substratum we know well." Waste is sealed in containers made of metal or concrete that are carefully inventoried. According to Armand Foussat, executive director of the Agence nationale française pour la gestion des déchets radioactifs, France's agency for radioactive waste management, the United States, Mexico, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Spain have all adopted this model. Type B wastes can be treated in the same way as those of type A, once the most dangerous elements have been removed.

The real problem lies with the third category. "The radioactivity of wastes of type C is Dantesque," continues Claude Guillemin. "Should we stock them in the ocean sediments? If we did, there would be a risk that they would re-emerge, still very radioactive, through underwater fissures or volcanoes. Should we send them into orbit around the Sun? If we did there would be the risk of an accident. Why not store them temporarily on the Earth's surface in "super Soulaines" for at least a hundred years. That would leave us time to increase our knowledge of the respective qualities of granite, clay, salt or schist before thinking of burying them deep underground."

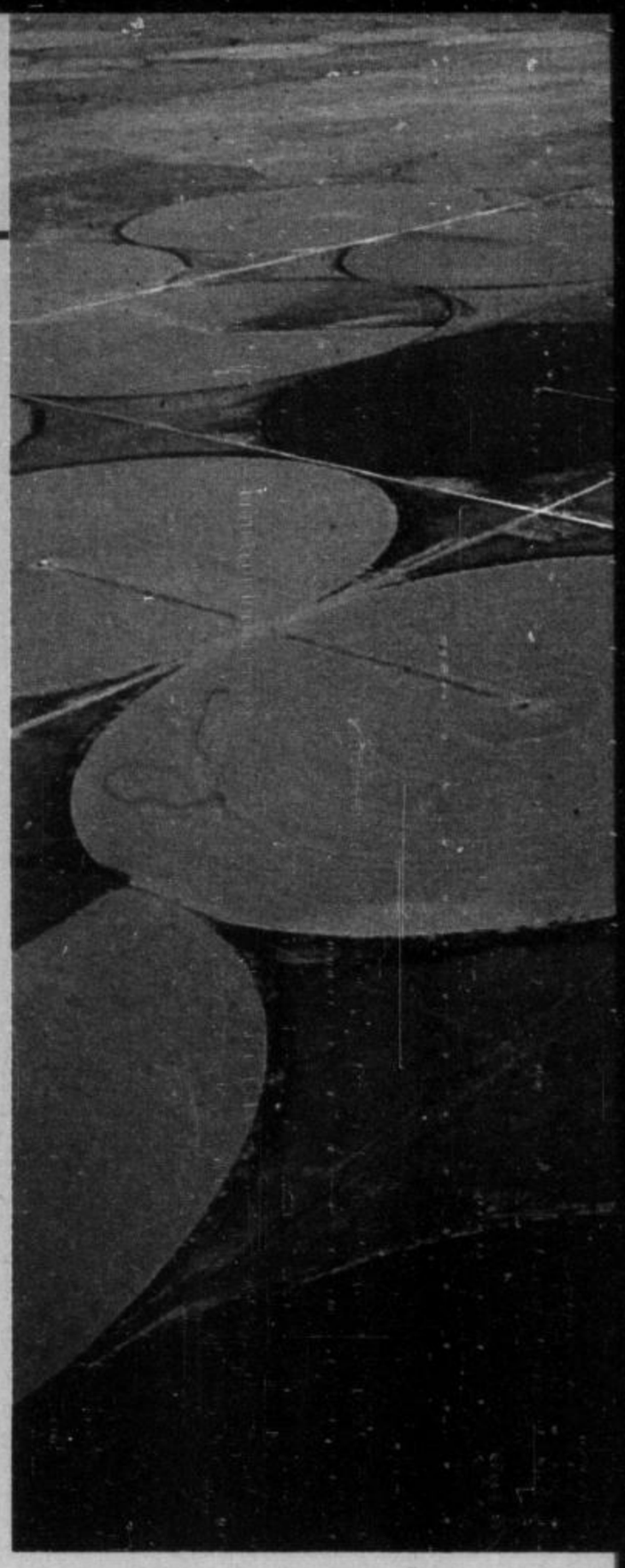
Promoting one kind of energy rather than another involves making choices about the kind of society we want to live in. In the meantime we can make a start by conserving as much energy as we can. ■

The core of the nuclear power plant at Gravelines in northern France.

FRANCE BEQUETTE is a Franco-American journalist specializing in environmental questions. Since 1985 she has been associated with the WANAD-UNESCO training programme for African news-agency journalists.

Ecology

A KEY RESOURCE AT RISK



WATER will be one of the most divisive environmental and political issues of the next fifteen or twenty years. The conflicts of the past over land and oil will seem minor in comparison to those over water. Conflict-resolution abilities will be as important as hydrology and engineering for ensuring future water supplies.

The Middle East is one place where problems could appear, along with northern Africa from Morocco to Egypt. Though water consumption generally is lower than available supply, the scales could tip the other way. Over the past ten years, drought has diminished the supply of the Nile, for instance, while consumption rates in Egypt have risen. And the Nile is not exclusively the province of Egypt; other countries too will be seeking a share of its water. Turkey and Iraq are arguing over rights to the waters of the Euphrates; Mexico and the United States have litigated over the waters of the Colorado; Bangladesh is at the mouth of the Ganges, but has no control over activities upriver in other countries.

The humid tropics are another area where water is a problem; the word "humid" should not be misconstrued as implying limitless supplies of water. In some areas there is not enough rainfall to provide good vegetation cover for the prevention of erosion. Soil erosion can claim over 100 tonnes of soil per hectare, and this is soil which is produced at a rate of only about one tonne per hectare per year. Land is being lost also to salinization, waterlogging and compaction, which are reducing productivity just as population increases require the opposite.

Population growth is a very serious problem. Most of it will occur in the developing world: Africa, Latin America, South Asia and East Asia. Urbanization problems are a consequence: the urban population in these regions has already tripled from 507 million in 1965 to 1.5 billion in 1990, and it is expected to rise to 2.2 billion by the year 2000. It is hardly surprising that land, air and water resources in the burgeoning metropolitan areas are stretched to their limits.

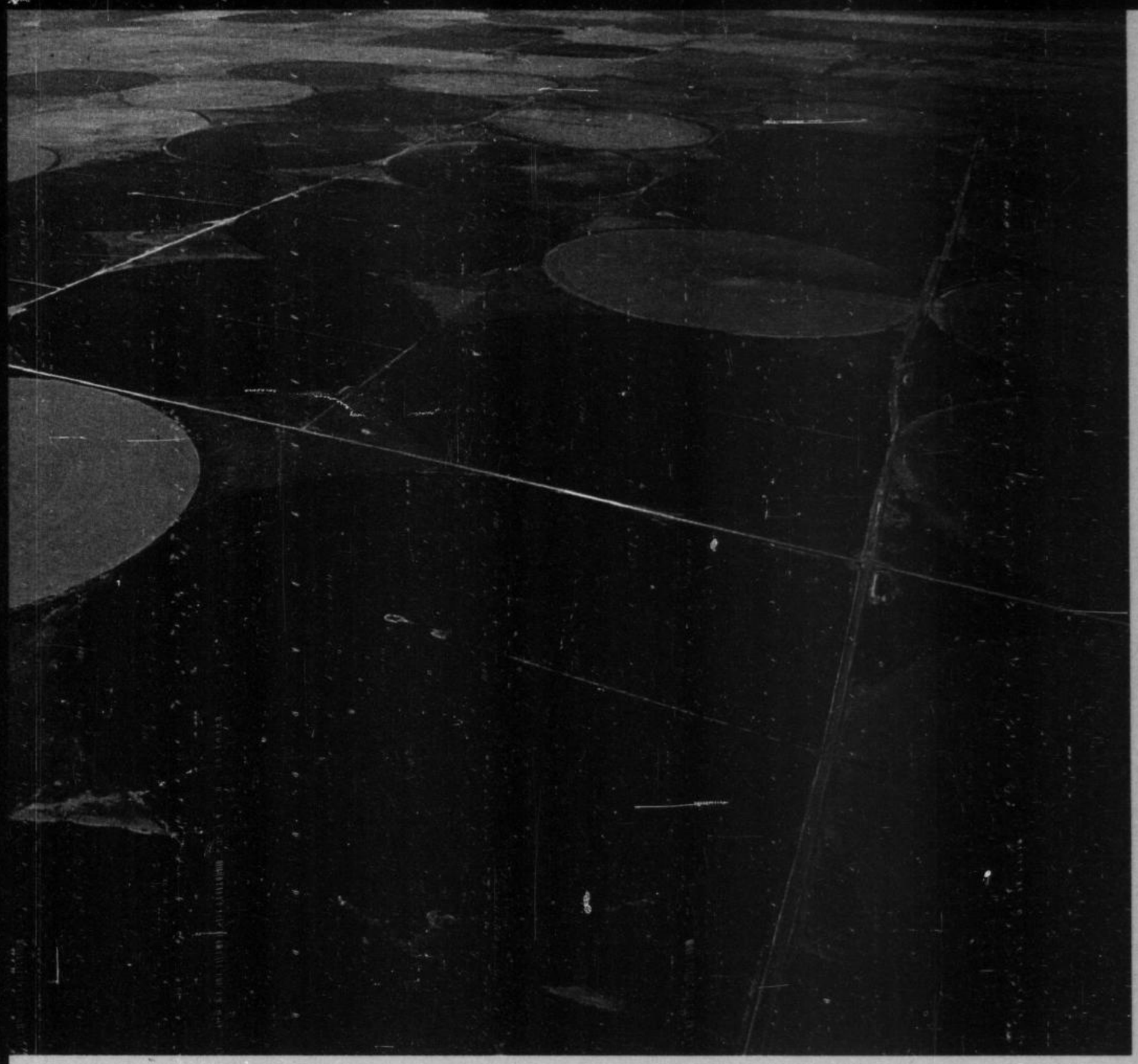
CITIES WITHOUT SAFE WATER

Urbanization and population growth are having serious repercussions on health. Notwithstanding major investments in water supply and sanitation systems, an estimated 40,000 children die daily (almost 15 million per year) as a result of water-related diseases. Over a third of those are deaths of children under five.

Ten years ago three-quarters of the urban communities in developing countries lacked adequate, healthy water supplies. Today, with population growth and the increased concentration of people in cities, the situation has not improved. Water supplies in many rural areas are also unhealthy.

The single most water-consuming human activity is agriculture. With a few exceptions, as in Israel, where new technologies are used, irrigation, essential to the great advances in agricultural productivity, is wasteful. Much of the water evaporates, especially in the warm, dry climates where irrigation is most needed. Some estimates suggest that 70 per cent of total water use, and 90 per cent of irretrievable consumptive use of water, is due to irrigation. Worldwide, the amount of irrigated land has grown fivefold in the course of the present century, from 47.3 million hectares in 1900 to 272 million in 1990. Not infrequently, would-be agricultural users of water and city-dwellers in need of drinking water and sanitation systems find themselves in direct conflict over available supplies.

A water resource only recently



Irrigated cropland in Texas (U.S.A.).

becoming understood is groundwater, usually quite sweet water stored in underground aquifers. In recent years there has been increasing alarm at the extent to which these invisible reservoirs, traditionally deemed "safe" from pollution, have been invaded by heavy metals and toxins, and by agricultural chemicals seeping down from the Earth's surface. In Europe, the first aquifer layer, lying under many of the continent's countries, is almost entirely polluted, most of it by pollutants in general agricultural chemicals. A major aquifer in North America, the Ogalala, is also being contaminated.

WATER, WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Despite considerable progress in understanding water and hydrology, clearly much more needs to be done. UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme has been dealing with these problems for twenty-five years. The present preoccupation is how to establish intelligent water-resource strategies for sustainable development, as water is clearly the limiting factor. No longer will it be sufficient for engineers and hydrologists merely to identify, and then build systems to tap water supplies for human use. At this point we lack some very important data specifically on water and hydrological cycles.

While in many countries there is good hydrological monitoring, in others there is less. In Africa today, where population growth and water-resource needs seem to be on a collision course, there is no effective continent-wide, co-ordinated and reliably working hydrological network. Beyond local or regional hydrology, we now know that climate and weather are intricately tied to water- and land-use patterns and to human activity. Yet there is no global network to consider the interrelationships between the hydrological cycle, oceans, weather and climate.

Like other environmental issues, water is only one strand in a complex web, neither understandable nor manageable in isolation from the other strands. More hydrologists, engineers and pollution-control specialists are called for. More understanding of the inter-environmental issues is required, but just as important will be an understanding of the human dimension—culture, history, settlement patterns, economics. Dealing with water will also require rare political co-operation among a wide range of groups, nations, regions and continents. This will take great skill and great sensitivity. And above all there must be a strong awareness of the unity of the planet and the interrrelationship of the destinies of those who live on it. ■

NANCY MATHEWS is a journalist specializing in environmental questions. Office of Public Information, UNESCO.

Voices from the past

THE RAINBOW SONG

THE Pygmies, hunter-gatherers dispersed through the African equatorial forest from the Atlantic Ocean to the great lakes, are notable not only for their small stature but also for the extraordinary way in which they have adapted to forest life. The forest is a prodigal and benevolent tutelary deity which, in return for the performance of a small number of magic rituals, guarantees their day-to-day survival in conditions of relative abundance.

In their study on the religions of black Africa,* L.V. Thomas and R. Luneau write that "Whenever he sees a rainbow, which is a symbol of the divinity, any Pygmy—or the chief speaking for the whole group if they are gathered together—must stop whatever he is doing and stand facing it. He draws his bow to resemble the rainbow, but in such a way as almost to hide it from view. He then sings, or rather chants in a monotone and, except at the end, almost on a single note, the celebrated *Rainbow Song.*"

* *Les religions d'Afrique noire* (Fayard-Denoël publishers, Paris, 1969)

■ *The Pygmies' Rainbow Song appears in an anthology entitled* Compagnons du Soleil *("Companions of the Sun") which is to be co-published (in French) by* UNESCO *Editions de la Découverte (Paris) and the Fondation pour le progrès de l'Homme. The anthology has been prepared under the general editorship of the African historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo, in collaboration with Marie-Josèphe Beaud.*

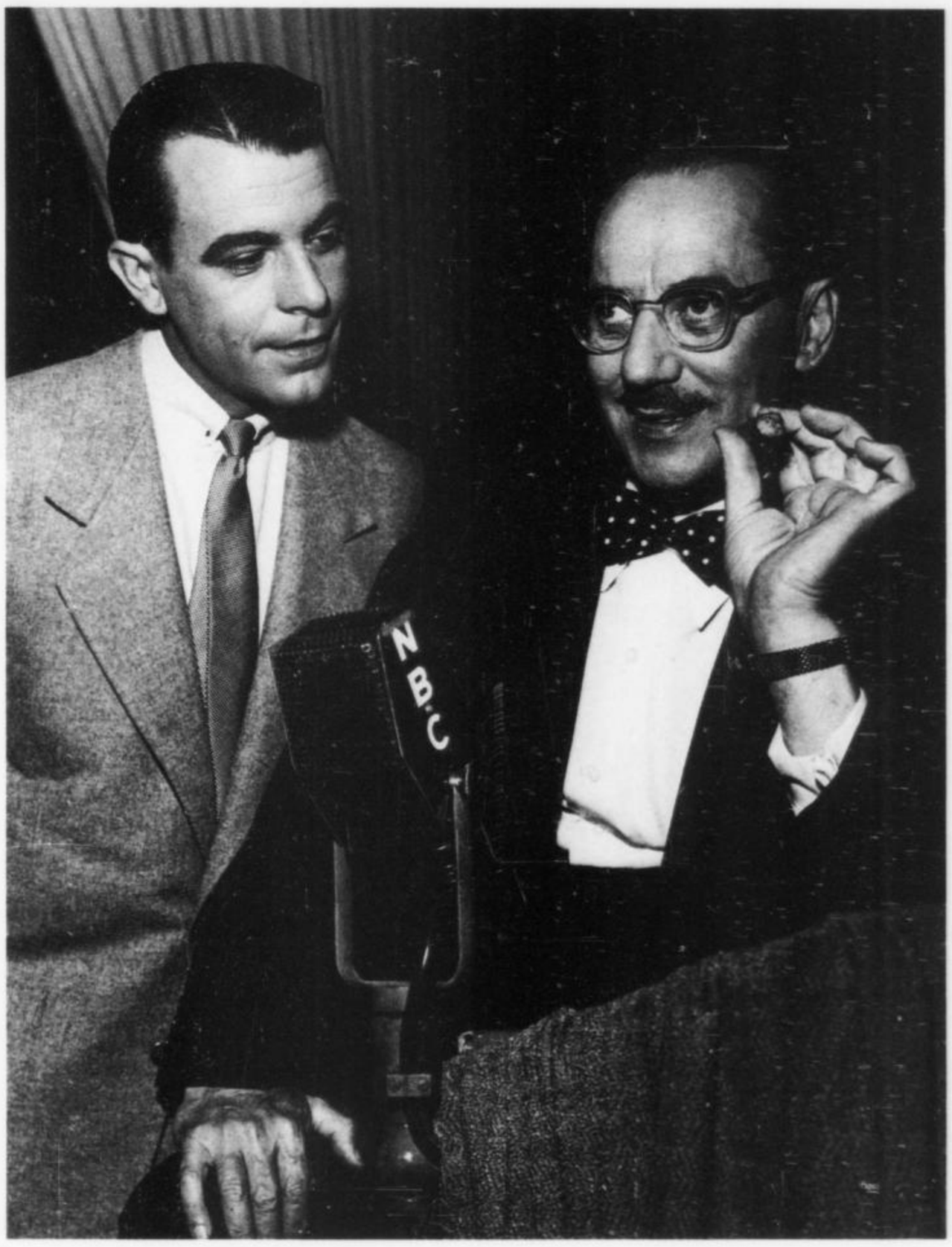
Khwa, yé, oh! Khwa! Rainbow, oh Rainbow!
Shining up there, so high,
Above the forest so wide,
In the midst of black clouds,
Splitting the dark sky,
You have cast down beneath you,
Victorious in the struggle,
The rumbling thunder
That rumbled so loud,
Angry, was it with us?
In the midst of black clouds
Splitting the dark sky,
Like a knife rotten fruit,
Rainbow, oh Rainbow.
Now he has fled from you,
The Thunder, the Man-killer,
Like the deer from the panther,
Now he has taken flight.
Rainbow, oh Rainbow,
Strong bow of the hunter on high,
Who chases the cloud-herds,
Like herds of scared elephants,
Rainbow, thank him for us,
Tell him, Do not be angry.
Tell him, Do not be wroth.
Tell him not to kill us.
For we are very scared.
Rainbow, tell him that.

Fiction

Fiction—notably in series or serial form—is the world's most popular type of television. The international market for TV fiction was long dominated by productions from North America, but today other countries are making their own programmes, often taking the form of family sagas or social dramas which are winning a wide following.

The United States: the early years

by Alain Garel



A cigar-toting Groucho Marx presents the game-show *You Bet Your Life* on America's NBC television network. The show, which began in 1947 as a radio programme, transferred successfully to the small screen, where it ran until 1961.

THE outbreak of the Second World War set back the emergence of television in the United States as it did elsewhere. The new medium did not really take off until 1946. It then developed so fast that it was soon seen as a threat by film production companies, already unsettled by the 1949 antitrust law that prohibited the Hollywood studios from combining the production, distribution and exploitation functions.

In 1953, some studios launched a counter-offensive based on technological developments such as CinemaScope, 3-D, Cinerama and stereophonic sound, as well as on superproductions with huge sets, spectacular special effects and casts of thousands. This was a clever strategy, for television with its tiny black and white screen hardly seemed capable of competing with wide-screen epics like *Ben Hur, El Cid, Spartacus* or *The Alamo.* It was also short-lived, however, for such productions were by their nature exceptional. Besides, the studios' position was ambivalent: while setting themselves up as rivals of television, they were also signing agreements with intermediary organizations and with the TV channels themselves to produce programmes, sell film rights and hire out equipment.

Radio days

Television started with one great advantage: the three national channels (ABC, CBS and NBC) were already established across North America. They had run radio stations since the 1920s, and each had a privileged relationship with its financial backers. A fourth channel, DuMont, stopped broadcasting in 1956 because it failed to ensure equivalent technical, financial and commercial support.

The Honeymooners **was one of the best-known sitcoms of the 1950s and 1960s, the golden age of American television.**

Building on their broadcasting experience, the three national channels immediately carved out a sizeable audience for themselves. The 1930s had been the decade of radio. Received in every home, the comedies, dramas, serials, game and variety shows that made up the bulk of its repertoire had an enthusiastic following. Naturally enough, most television programmes started life as adaptations of popular radio shows.

It is hard to imagine what American television was like in the 1940s and 1950s, because virtually all programmes went out live and few were recorded. Most of the recordings have subsequently been lost or else have deteriorated. Nonetheless, the vitality and creativity of the young medium were never in doubt. Nor was there much argument about the quality of the programmes, in particular the prestigious drama series featuring material written by authors such as Gore Vidal and Rod Sterling and directed by the likes of John Frankenheimer and George Roy Hill—who once recreated the sinking of the *Titanic* live with 700 actors and thirty-five sets.

The film industry soon began to hire television directors both to make original films and to adapt small-screen successes for the cinema. Some of these films became classics. They included Robert Mulligan's *Baby the Rain Must Fall,* John Cassavetes' *A Child is Waiting,* Martin Ritt's *Edge of the City,* Arthur Penn's *The Left-handed Gun* and *The Miracle Worker,* Delbert Mann's *Marty,* Ralph Nelson's *Requiem for a Heavyweight* and Sidney Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men.*

Noted film directors such as Tom Gries, Arthur Hiller, Sam Peckinpah, Sydney Pollack and Steven Spielberg started their careers in television. Other directors with established reputations in the cinema followed the example set by many film actors and went to work in television. Veterans like John Ford, Robert Siodmak and Alfred Hitchcock (who even had his own programme), as well as younger filmmakers like Blake Edwards, Samuel Fuller, Robert Parrish and Don Siegel, all worked for the new medium.

This movement between television and the cinema was encouraged by the dropping of live shows in favour of taped ones and by the development of recording on film. Television drama, a hybrid between radio drama and stage plays that was the high spot of what is now often called American television's golden age, gave way gradually to a new genre, the series, which in many ways recalled the old B-movies, employing low budgets, limited shooting times and formula plotting.

Sitcoms triumphant

Audience interest determines how long a series runs. Some never reach ten episodes, while others rack up a hundred or even 400 instal-

ments. Most episodes last for thirty or sixty minutes, but some may stretch to ninety minutes, including advertising breaks. Some series have featured the same characters week in week out. Others, including such celebrated examples as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents, Police Story* and *The Twilight Zone,* have an entirely new cast each time, while conserving a consistent tone and narrative style, generally set by the personality of the presenter.

For years TV, like the cinema, went in for a wide range of genres. There were spy series, detective stories, comedy, adventure, war, science fiction, the supernatural, westerns. In the past decade, however, the range has narrowed, and the dominant genres today are police and crime shows and comedy—usually domestic situation comedies featuring typical American families.

One reason why the series formula became so popular is that it could be easily scheduled into strategic time-slots. A weekly series, with the same characters reappearing at the same time in similarly structured adventures, could attract

Right, Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), master of suspense.
Below, a scene from Sydney Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men* (1957), starring Henry Fonda.

a faithful audience and keep advertisers happy. But the limitations of the format nonetheless soon became apparent, and the networks, which were no longer able to make do with the backlists of the old Hollywood studios, began to finance "telefeatures" with the encouragement of the film companies themselves. In 1964 Universal became the first studio to produce telefilms with David Lowell Rich's *See How They Run* and two films by Don Siegel, *The Hanged Man* and *The Killers* (the latter of which was finally adjudged too violent for television and was released in cinemas instead).

Some telefilms are self-contained stories; others are "pilots", intended to be the first, feature-length episodes of series that only go into production if audience response is favourable. Like the series, they work B-movie territory. At first they too used a broad range of material, but soon confined themselves to a limited number of subjects.

At present there are basically three types of telefilm: police or crime stories, drama, and remakes of classic films. The large number of crime films can partly be explained by the success of "cop movies" in the cinema, where they are virtually the only kind of film to have survived the disappearance of the Hollywood giants. Moreover, the dimensions and technical characteristics of the television screen, as well as TV's association with news and reporting, give such a sheen of realism to crime stories that many telefilms opt for a documentary format, which they often accentuate by reconstructing authentic cases in detail. In this respect, the productions are very different from their equivalent in the cinema, which for the past decade have tended to be overreliant on spectacular action sequences.

The would-be-documentary style is also used in the most interesting and original kind of television films, those which tackle social themes and are often referred to as "docudramas" or drama documentaries. These films highlight social problems such as unemployment, pollution, homosexuality, sexism, racism,

suicide, drug addiction, prostitution, incurable disease, divorce, loneliness, delinquency, justice and education. Some of them are based on real-life events, whose implications are skilfully explored with the aid of fictional techniques. The fictional element creates an emotional interest, prevents the films from becoming disagreeably didactic and helps increase awareness of issues the public may have been genuinely unconscious of or pretended to ignore. In a modest way, television today acts as a provider of information and civic education and has adopted a similar role to that played by the cinema during the Great Depression of the 1930s, in the 1940s and 1950s in the wake of the Second World War, and in the 1960s and 1970s at the time of the protest movements—a role which it now seems to have abandoned in favour of spectacular entertainment.

The third type of telefilm is less original than the other two. Just as cinema, for want of good scripts, has for the past ten years or more gone in for remakes, so television has been content to recycle big-screen classics without being able to equal them in quality, as the new versions of *The Best Years of Our Lives, The Letter, Operation Petticoat, The Red Badge of Courage* and *Winchester '73* testify. Freed from the time constraints of the cinema, television has also adapted works of literature that have already been filmed, such as *From Here to Eternity* and *East of Eden,* and has produced screen versions of best-sellers by writers including James Clavell, Arthur Hailey, James Michener, Harold Robbins, Irwin Shaw, Sydney Sheldon and Herman Wouk. Because of their length, these dramatizations are shown in a number of episodes as mini-series, which run from four to twenty-six hours. The plotting is often weak and confused.

Mini-series constitute a further link with American television's roots in radio, which is also the original source of the "soap operas", melodramatic serials that owe their name to the fact that they were initially sponsored by the major soap and detergent manufacturers. Most are shot from day to day with three video cameras in a few fixed sets, as they were in Sydney Pollack's parody *Tootsie.* They are intended primarily for internal consumption and few of them are exported.

On the other hand, more expensive and elaborate productions such *Dallas, Santa Barbara* and *West Coast* have attracted a vast audience worldwide. Week after week, the same stereotyped characters, moved by simple emotions, become involved in situations full of conflict and drama. The formula is always the same: at the end of each episode the cast is enmeshed in tensions that are resolved the following week. In this respect, soap operas have some affinities with the serialized novels that were popular in nineteenth-century Europe, whose contemporary equivalents they in many ways seem to be. ❐

***Bagdad Café*, a film made by the German director Percy Adlon, was so successful that it was subsequently adapted for American television (below).**

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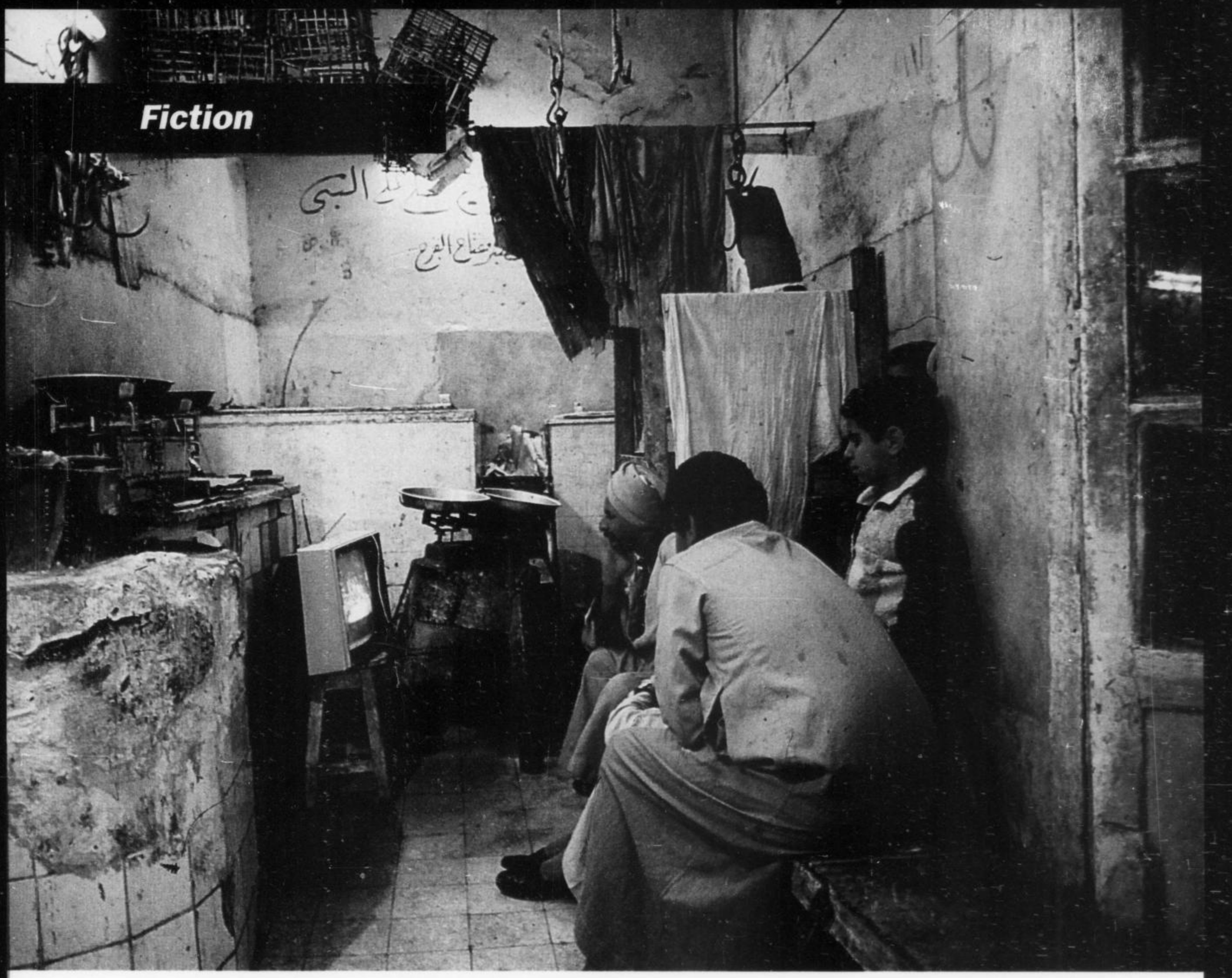

Egypt: a national obsession

by Samir Gharib

HERE in Egypt television has a powerful hold over people's minds. It is an instrument of leisure, of information and—to a very limited extent—of culture. It does not stop people reading newspapers or books, going to the cinema or theatre or watching videos. But these activities are occasional, irregular and ultimately of secondary importance, while television is a permanent and ubiquitous fixture.

There must be a number of interrelated reasons for such an ascendancy, with economic, political and cultural factors all coming into play. But no-one has tried to analyse these reasons rigorously, using statistical data and making comparisons with other societies similar to our own. Maybe people prefer not to know. What is certain, however, is that television is one of the main subjects of conversation, at school, in offices, at home and in the street, as well as being written about in all the newspapers.

No serious study has been made of the

Above, watching a television serial in an Aswan butcher's shop.

influence this strange despot exercises in Egypt—or, to be more precise, of the whole bundle of contradictory effects it has on people of different age groups, social classes and cultural backgrounds. An opportunity to appreciate the diversity of attitudes television inspires arose recently when a girl was raped in public in one of Cairo's most crowded squares. This unprecedented event provoked a spate of comments on the role of television, ranging from the widely-held view that the media are responsible for such acts of licence to passionate vindications of the media on the grounds that they perform an essential role in revealing the undercurrents of society.

Television is doubtless at one and the same time cause and effect, both a reflection and an accelerator of the erratic behaviour patterns of a fragmented and rapidly changing society which, like so many in the Third World today, is in need of fixed landmarks. If in this context television sometimes seems like a rudderless ship, it is because society itself has no driving force capable of steering it in a definite direction or of giving it a coherent orientation.

Serials that bring a nation to a standstill

It might be said that the fundamental objective of television is to persuade the maximum number of people to watch it for the maximum amount of time. And how effectively serials and series do that! I do not think that I have ever seen any other country so totally dominated by these shows, some, it is true, Egyptian-made but the majority American. Each episode, each programme, is a talking-point for everyone, young and old alike.

Contrasting scenes from Egyptian TV serials: below, *Ra'afat El Haggan;* opposite page, *Woulida'l Hoda.*

Do American soap operas arouse the same enthusiasm when they are shown in Europe? I think not, and for a reason that seems obvious to me. In Europe it is possible to meet people like those who appear on the screen. Their lifestyles and the social roles they play are easily imaginable in the West. In Egypt, however, they are inconceivable, and that explains their immense success. They take us out of ourselves.

There is a paradox here. American series and soap operas are full of images and attitudes that no Egyptian production would dare to present—for it would be immediately censored if it did. Why should something be permissible in an American production that is illicit in an Egyptian one? It is not for nothing that I spoke earlier of a rudderless ship.

Many Egyptian women take American small-screen heroines as their models, imitating their style of dressing, talking and even thinking. As a result, relatively little-known actresses can become veritable idols here. A lady named Dona Miles received a welcome at the Cairo film festival in December 1991 that was substantially warmer than that accorded to much better-known film stars.

This is not surprising in Egypt, where an extraordinary ritual takes place when it is time for a serial to begin. All the members of the family stop whatever they have been doing and sit glued to the screen. This ritual is not confined to those with time on their hands. If you want to leave the free-trade zone in Port Said while a serial is on, then forget it. You won't be able to get through customs until the end of the episode.

Last year the studio of a well-known painter, Mustapha Al-Razaz, burned to the ground, and all his paintings and his library were reduced to ashes. No-one thought of going to his aid. The fire had started one evening in Ramadan, just at the moment when a popular serial was beginning.

The nights of Ramadan

I should explain that Ramadan, the month of fasting, is the one above all others in which television reigns supreme. This is partly because people have more time on their hands than during the rest of the year, but also because cinemas and theatres close down and other public cultural activities come to a halt. During Ramadan people go on a kind of television binge. Besides the normal shows, special serials running from the first to the last day of the month are produced each year and are eagerly awaited by millions of viewers. The

stories may be modern or adaptations from *The Thousand and One Nights.*

Above all, there are the immensely popular game-shows (*fawazir*), featuring singing and dancing, which are forbidden in nightclubs and theatres during Ramadan. The game-shows are sponsored by firms that offer substantial prizes to winning contestants, but their main purpose is to provide a small-screen platform for the stars of show business. Many still remember the appearances of Nelly and Sherihan, who during Ramadan staged on television the shows they were not allowed to produce in the theatre.

At other times of the year serials are the main dish in the daily television diet. The two principal channels each show two serials, one Egyptian, the other foreign. They have become part of the Egyptian way of life, familiar features of every Egyptian's landscape. If you are arranging to meet someone, for example, you might decide to do so "after the Arabic serial." Your interlocutor will understand.

In the course of the year about twenty serials are broadcast, each running for an average of ten forty-five-minute episodes. That means that the leading actors are on screen for almost eight hours. Some, of course, continue for much longer than that. *Layali al-Helmiya* has already notched up more than 100 episodes and is not yet finished. The heroes of this serial have so far appeared for more than seventy-five hours on screen in a show whose unprecedented success can no doubt be explained by the fact that it is a historical chronicle covering the last four decades in Egypt and features characters and situations with which everyone can identify (see page 36).

Ra'afat El Haggan, based on a novel by Saleh Morsi, has also been exceptionally durable. Its hero is an Egyptian secret agent, and its success draws both on American espionage films and on Egyptian patriotic sentiment.

Most of the serials, however, deal with social problems. In fact all the arts, including cinema and theatre as well as television, have for some years past tended to focus on social and political matters. This widespread phenomenon reflects a new state of mind. What is involved is not, strictly speaking, social criticism in the sense of an analysis of past or present failings suggesting future solutions. Rather the programmes fix viewers' attention on situations with which they can easily identify but whose interest is purely anecdotal. As such, they are deliberately kept from being anything more than entertainment without instructional value. What a pity! ❐

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Layali al-Helmiya or Dallas-on-the-Nile

LAYALI AL-HELMIYA ("Al-Helmiya Nights") is Egypt's most popular serial. Set in a working-class district of Cairo, it takes place against a backdrop of the events that have marked the nation's history over the past half-century. The main character is a "pasha" or aristocrat called Selim El-Badry, who is married to a greedy and overbearing society belle named Nazek Hanem. Tired of her caprices, he falls in love with a local girl, whom he decides to take as his second wife. Enraged, Nazek Hanem demands a divorce and sets out to get her own back.

Her revenge is to marry Soliman Ghanem, a self-made *omda* (village mayor) who is the pasha's rival. Although she despises Ghanem, she bears him a daughter, Zohra. Meanwhile the pasha's young wife dies while giving birth to a son, Ali. Nazek Hanem at once leaves the *omda* and goes back to Selim. She packs her daughter, an unpleasant reminder of her second marriage, off to an orphanage.

All this takes place at the time of the anti-colonial struggle, and among the various other characters involved is a revolutionary patriot, Taha Samahi, who in spite of his convictions is obliged to marry a girl of his own social class. The couple have a son, Nagui. Soon after, Taha is killed in a demonstration. Nagui is brought up by his mother and becomes a magistrate of integrity and a man of principle like his father.

The pace of events quickens with the coming to power of Nasser, who imposes socialism on the country and nationalizes industries and the fortunes of the rich. Nazek Hanem divorces Selim once more, and he then marries a princess from the entourage of ex-King Farouk. Fleeing the country, he sets up house in Paris with his new wife, leaving his son Ali, now grown up, to finish his studies at the Polytechnic in Cairo. Unlike his father, Ali is a fervent revolutionary and is imprisoned several times for his views. Meanwhile Zohra has been reunited with her father, the *omda* Soliman Ghanem, and is now a journalist. She shares a romantic idyll with Ali, but then settles for security by secretly marrying the editor-in-chief of her newspaper.

The military defeat of 1967 rocks Egyptian society and leaves a mood of bitterness that endures until the moral victory of 1973 restores the nation's optimism. These events are reflected in the lives of the people of al-Helmiya. Zohra gets a divorce. Selim, the former pasha, comes back to Egypt, encouraged by Sadat's "open-door" policy. He builds an industrial and financial empire, but his marriage to Nourhan is on the rocks. His son Ali, faced with the ruin of his political and romantic hopes, also devotes himself to the pursuit of money and power.

Meanwhile the *omda* has been investing in new markets and, at the age of sixty, has secretly married a young servant. She turns out to be only interested in his money and he soon repudiates her. Nazek Hanem is as scheming as ever and continues to get what she wants, taking to corruption quite as enthusiastically as her new husband, Mazen, the unscrupulous owner of a large hospital complex. Zohra, returning from Paris where she had gone to forget the failure of her marriage, becomes an accomplished business woman and attempts to win back Ali.

The assassination of Sadat brings an end to an era marked by the growth of the black market, currency speculation and the malversation of public funds. The Mubarak years that follow witness the triumph of industrialization and construction.

Layali al-Helmiya has an eventful future ahead of it. ❐

India: TV at the crossroads

Fiction

by Aruna Vasudev and L.K. Malhatra

WHEN the decision to introduce television to India was taken in 1958, there were many who questioned it. Can we afford it? asked some. Why have television when we don't have enough food, clothing and shelter? Television will degenerate into entertainment and we can do without that, said the puritans. Who will watch television? others asked. If, as intended, it is going to be purely educational, then those who can afford a set won't watch and those for whom it is designed will not have access to it.

Despite the controversy, television broadcasting began in 1959. It was a modest beginning—there was one little studio, from which an hour of programmes was transmitted twice a week. There were farm programmes for rural audiences, folk dancing and music, programmes of practical interest to women, the occasional short play telecast live. It was all very basic and simple and so it remained for several years. Gradually the hours of transmission were increased, but technical improvements were very slow in coming. The problem was that television was treated by the government as an extension of radio, which had been well established for decades. For a long time it was conceived of as sound accompanied by elementary black and white pictures. One decision stood unchanged through all the years: there would be no imported programmes, we would consume our own images.

Above, a family watches television in the Punjab.

The transformation came in 1982, when the Asian Games were held in Delhi. The then Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Vasant Sathe, was determined that the coverage of the games should be of international quality. A crash training programme was launched for technicians, and the major decision was made to shift to colour. Controversy erupted again. Why should we spend so much on colour? It was pandering to pressure from urban television owners who wanted entertainment. What about education? the purists asked. Sport *is* educational, came the reply. The same questions that had been heard twenty years before were asked again. But the situation had changed, economically and technically. Values too had changed.

The arguments for and against colour continued for many months. Educational transmissions had been started in the afternoons, mainly of science programmes for children. These, said the authorities, would be much more effective in colour, easier to understand and a more attractive proposition for young viewers. Audiences were accustomed to colour because of the cinema. Technocrats and many media commentators also felt that it was time we caught up with advancing technology. Black and white was being phased out all over the world. Agreements were made with Japan, Korea and Germany for thousands of TV sets to be supplied in time for the Asian Games, and import restrictions were lifted for a specific period to enable people to bring colour television sets into the country. Colour television sets poured in.

Family entertainment

Another development was taking place simultaneously. The Minister had been struck by the use Mexico had made of soap operas to spread developmental messages, and a team of experts was sent there to find out why this operation had been so successful. Following the Mexican trip, the idea for a soap opera called *Hum Log* ("People like Us") was developed in collaboration with a well-known writer named Manohar Sham Joshi and a little-known feature film director, P. Kumar Vasudev. Starting from the romantic yearnings of a modest young man from a poor family for the beautiful and spoilt daughter of a wealthy widower, it turned into the epic story of two families, with sub-plots involving brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and grandparents. The young man ends up working for the girl's father who, it turns out later, is a big-time smuggler. The daughter marries a prince of doubtful antecedents who is later involved in getting her father murdered. The prince is finally unmasked and killed. Throughout the story, the young man's devotion does not waver.

Floods of letters poured in, those asking when the two would marry outnumbering those expressing disapproval of such a union. The serial ended two years and 159 episodes after it had begun. Whether or not the two would come together remained an open question, perhaps in a gesture to conservative opinion that might have been disturbed by such a "happy ending". This was family entertainment of a kind that had not been seen before in India, but any development message it might have contained was well hidden.

Even the producers of the serial and the authorities responsible for its birth were taken aback by the extent of its popularity. No stars had been cast in it. The young people who played the two leading roles were just out of school and had no acting experience, and the other actors mostly came from amateur theatre in Delhi. Then, overnight, India's first television stars were born. The actors were mobbed in the streets, overwhelmed with awards and accolades. It was as if people were yearning for situations and characters they could identify with.

The tremendous response to *Hum Log* opened the floodgates. Televiewers who had been hooked on it and advertisers who had suddenly discovered the phenomenal reach of television called for more serials of the same kind. Hopeful young film-makers offered to make them. The authorities, finding that advertising could painlessly provide the immense amount of capital required for large-scale expansion, threw open television to advertising, going against the principles and policies they had laid down earlier.

With money easily available, production standards improved rapidly. The commercials acquired a slick Western look and made a clever sales pitch. Many felt with dismay that this was an open invitation to the disasters of consumerism. Advertisements are often aimed at children, who sing the commercials and demand the products television dangles before their eyes. Advertisers compete for prime advertising spots that go with the serials, which are shown seven days a week at 9 p.m., between the twenty-minute national news telecast in Hindi at 8.40 and in English at 9.30 p.m.

A kind of "serial madness" has taken over. Everybody from film producers and film stars to retired government officials and clerks with contacts in high places wants to produce serials. Many succeed. After the amazing run of *Hum Log,* hundreds of other serials have been shown, some with over a hundred episodes. They have featured an extraordinary variety of subjects, but only a few have captured the hearts and minds of the television public.

Shortly after *Hum Log* came *Buniyaad* ("Foundation Stone"). Another family epic, it took as its starting point the partition of India in 1947 and followed the fortunes of a single family over three generations. The family's plight arriving in Delhi as refugees from Lahore struck a chord with many people in northern India who still retained traumatic memories of

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A scene from *Paras Pathar* (1958), a film by the great Indian director Satyajit Ray (1921-1991).

partition. *Buniyaad*, which was broadcast twice a week for a year and ran to 104 episodes, became a cult, and its characters became household names. It ended in March 1987, but cassettes of it are available in all video rental libraries in India. It appears to have been equally popular in Pakistan.

Nothing, however, could equal the astonishing impact of the serialization of the great Indian epics that came soon after—the *Ramayana* and, two years later, the *Mahabharata*. The popularity of the *Ramayana* particularly surpassed all expectations. When it was shown on Sunday mornings, people would bathe and dress before sitting down reverently in front of their television sets. Popular myth combined with religious sentiment to evoke total audience identification. It was proof, if any proof were needed, that for Indians the roots of cultural expression still lie firmly embedded in these two great epics.

However, many people were alarmed by what they saw as elements of kitsch in a production that reduced great poetry and high culture into a kind of bazaar art. Apprehensions about a worrying Hindu revivalism were also expressed because the *Ramayana* serial, more than the *Mahabharata*, emphasized the Hindu religious rather than the Indian cultural nature of the stories. Perhaps to counter this criticism, the Indian television authority, Doordarshan, is now ready to start serializing stories from the Bible.

Sport and late-night movies

Sports programmes are almost as popular as serials. Cricket has always been popular with Indian audiences, but television has turned it into a national passion. Life virtually comes to a standstill during one-day international matches. In shops and offices transistors are turned on full blast, while those who can, stay at home to watch television. The rate of absenteeism from offices, schools and colleges rises dramatically during those days. Two cricketing

idols, Ravi Shastri and the legendary Sunil Gavaskar, have produced and presented cricket serials that attracted a wide following on Sunday mornings. Live coverage of tennis, particularly the Wimbledon semi-finals and finals, football and hockey matches and athletics, has proved to be a great incentive to sports participation among students.

For many years, Sunday evening was reserved for a popular Hindi film of the kind, produced in Bombay, which has served as the model for commercial films made in all the languages of India. Today this film is shown on Saturday evenings, and on Sundays the regional networks show popular films in local languages.

Twice a week half-hour programmes of song sequences compiled from popular films reinforce the passion for cinema. To offset this to some extent, an attempt was made to introduce audiences to the "alternative" cinema, showing a "serious" film in different Indian languages (with English subtitles) on Sunday afternoons. But sandwiched between a morning of serials and the popular film in the evening, this remains a gesture rather than a genuine attempt to create a deeper understanding.

The latest controversy focuses on Doordarshan's decision to show outstanding films twice a week at 11.30 p.m., an Indian film on Tuesday nights, a film from another country on Friday nights. These films are meant for adult viewing, but there has been a vigorous protest that children stay up to watch them and that even adults arrive at work bleary-eyed the next morning. No matter that it is for parents to prevent children from watching and for the adults to take adult decisions about their sleeping hours. The blame is placed squarely on Doordarshan for providing the temptation. Meanwhile, the late-night movies continue.

Accused of selling out to commercialism and the serials, sponsored by big business, Doordarshan has taken another significant step in dealing directly with directors and producers to buy documentary serials on such topical issues as the environmental crisis and drug addiction. But these are usually shown late at night, defeating their very purpose.

Programming has to take account of the audience's lack of homogeneity and the number of languages spoken in India. From 6 p.m., when the evening transmission starts, each station broadcasts locally produced programmes in regional languages. At 8.40 p.m., the National Programme beamed from Delhi takes over, with the news in Hindi. Nine p.m. is serial time, followed by the news in English. Discussions on current affairs, a documentary of "national" interest, classical dance or music bring the evening to a close at 11 p.m., except for the Tuesday and Friday late-night film.

The last two years have brought dramatic changes in the Indian media environment. In answer to persistent criticism of the low standard of programmes and the stultifying system that did not allow a more lively spirit to emerge, the government took the daring step of introducing a Bill to create autonomous bodies both for sound radio (AIR) and TV (Doordarshan) This project has had a chequered history. A Bill was passed by Parliament and became an Act towards the end of 1990, but before it could be implemented there was a change of government. And so after thirty-four years of existence Indian TV continues to be at the crossroads, a prisoner of indecision. ❐

A dancer performs in the television version of the *Ramayana*.

Brazil: a magnet for talent

by Dinapiera di Donato

A scene from *Valetudo* ("Anything Goes"), a Brazilian telenovela produced in 1989.

IT is midday. Millions of Brazilians eating lunch in front of their television sets are open-mouthed. On the screen is a man they have seen before—but never in his shirtsleeves. Looking worried, he calls them "my friends", asks them "not to condemn too hastily" and concludes his plea with a solemn "May God help us!" The media unanimously agree that this is a serious moment. The President of the Republic has just appeared on every television channel to defend himself before the nation against accusations of wrong-doing made by his own brother. Passers-by interviewed in the street say the brother has gone haywire and that the whole thing is like a TV serial.

Another disturbing piece of news. The bishop of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which happens to be the owner of the *TV Record* channel, has been arrested. Can it really be true that he has been involved in a ring supplying fake university degrees? Viewers barely have time to recover from this particular shock before they learn that the thirteen-year-old claimant to the throne of Brazil, the last descendant of the Emperor Pedro II and Princess Isabella of Portugal, has been abducted in front of the Imperial Museum in Petropolis, a city whose name could itself come from a science-fiction novel.

No, these are not episodes in a television soap opera. On this typical day in May 1992, the public wants above all to know if the motorway linking Rio de Janeiro's airport to the conference centre where the "Earth Summit" will open in a few days will be finished in time—a motorway that will also make it possible to avoid having to travel through the city's shanty-towns. Meanwhile Silvio Abreu, the author of the successful telenovela[1] *Guerra dos sexos* ("The Battle of the Sexes"), is preparing the screenplay for another serial, *Deus nos acuda* ("God Help Us"), in which God sends an envoy to the Brazilian inferno to try to find someone who can save the country. The protagonists are named Scandalous Mary, Celestina, Minister Gabriel. As the celebrated dramatist and television screenwriter Dias Gomes puts it, "Realism here is indissociable from the fantastic".

Brazil is a country where, according to a 1984 survey, television serials are more important to the national economy than the motor industry, and where the two leading TV networks, *Rede Globo* and *Manchete*, arguably have more impact on illiterates than the millions of reading manuals distributed by the national literacy campaign. The first university in Brazil was founded in 1922 so that King Leopold of Belgium could be welcomed with the correct protocol during a state visit, for at the time the Brazilian élite was educated at Coimbra or Paris. Now there are many universities and education has been democratized, but it is through television that most Brazilians complete their studies of sociology, geography and all kinds of other subjects.

This is the only explanation for the extraordinary success of *Pantanal* ("The Marsh"), a serial that brought to the small screen the forgotten landscapes of the Mato Grosso, the world of the jaguar-woman Yuma Marruá and of river spirits who speak to humans, of all the peasants, landowners and farmers who had long disappeared from the Brazilian city-dwellers' worldview. *Pantanal* piled on the special

1. Telenovelas—literally "telenovels"—are serials, mostly made in Brazil or Mexico, that are extremely popular in Latin America and elsewhere. *Editor.*

effects, which are very popular in Brazilian productions, depicting in amazing images the metamorphoses of Yuma Marruá or the majestic flight of wild birds. Viewers seeing Brazil's hidden face rising up before their eyes felt that they were returning to their roots and learning about the environment.

RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

The Brazilian telenovela is the product of a favourable set of circumstances that, without forcing it to eschew such conventions of the serial form as fragmented plotlines, suspense, love interest and emotional drama, prevents it from becoming too far-fetched or from portraying a world divided simplistically into goodies and baddies, and instead encourages humour and an interest in the ups and downs of everyday life. It is also the fruit of teamwork, benefiting from the combined efforts of the country's best dramatists, authors, actors, composer-musicians, directors and documentary film-makers. This is rarely the case in North America, where the television serial is regarded as a minor genre left to be semi-improvised by B-movie directors. The limitations of the serial format are the same in Brazil as elsewhere, but Brazilian programme-makers have long since learned how to overcome them and give free rein to their creativity.

When it began in the 1950s, Brazilian television established itself as an instrument of national unification through its *Tupi*, *Río*, *Excelsior* and *Rede Globo* channels. In the following decade the telenovela made a breakthrough into a world of bland programmes and pretentious drama. Telenovelas were soon taking Brazil by storm, particularly after *Excelsior* broadcast the serial *25-499 Isn't Answering*.

After a coup d'état in 1964 established a military dictatorship, telenovelas, unlike other types of programme, to a large extent—although not entirely—escaped censorship, and large numbers of them were made. In a crisis-torn society in search of an identity, the question of what it meant to be Brazilian was much debated. While the state alternately encouraged and banned the production of telenovelas, the latter became influenced by Cinema Novo and the Tropicalist movement.

Telenovelas ceased to be based on the once-popular historical romances and tearjerking stories of ruined aristocrats, and became closer to the facts of contemporary life. They drew on the talents of writers such as Guimarães Rosa, Jorge Amado, Aguinaldo Silva, Benedito Ruy Barbosa, Dias Gomes, Guarnieri and Suassune, of celebrated musician-composers including Toquinho, Vinicius de Moraes, Gal Costa and Roberto and Erasmo Carlos, and of leading actors and technicians. They used the everyday form of speech and regional dialects, and drew inspiration from real events. Under the influence of avant-garde theatre, new characters appeared—mendacious, corrupt and arriviste anti-heroes, and unusual women. Endings became more subtle and both tragedy and comedy were staged more professionally.

Telenovelas showed what no-one dared say out loud: that it was possible to be Brazilian without sheltering behind a narrow form of nationalism. The point is well illustrated by a serial that, because of censorship problems, took ten years to reach the screen. This was *Roque Santeiro*, directed by Dias Gomes, Aguinaldo Silva and others and set in Asa Branca. The story, which features a microcosm of Brazilian society, is rich in mythology, which in the words of one of the characters, blind Jeremy, is "more powerful than reality". Thanks to myth, the outcasts survive and the bold prosper—like the hero, a sculptor specializing in saints who ends up canonized even though he is at best a likeable rogue. In the end, the "baddies" (who really aren't all that bad) triumph, while the "goodies" come to realize that no-one really wants to know the truth, for fear that life in this marvellous country would become intolerable as a result. ❐

Three characters from the TV serial *Direito de amar* ("The Right to Love"). Produced in Brazil in 1987, it has also been shown in a number of other countries.

DINAPIERA DI DONATO
is a Venezuelan essayist who lectures at his country's Universidad de Oriente.

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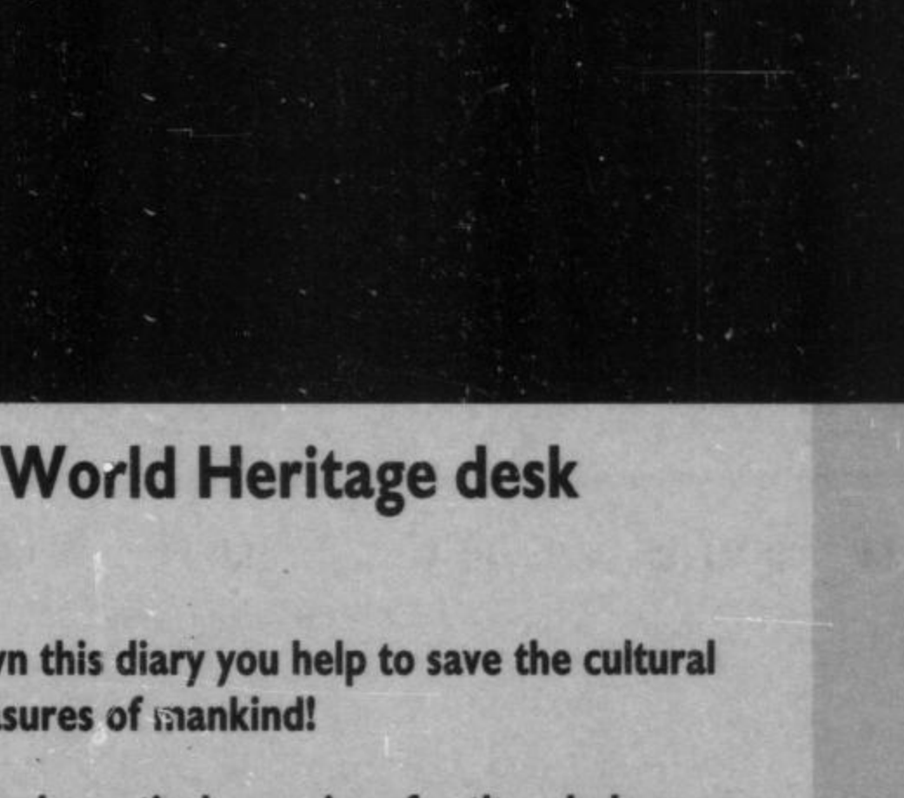

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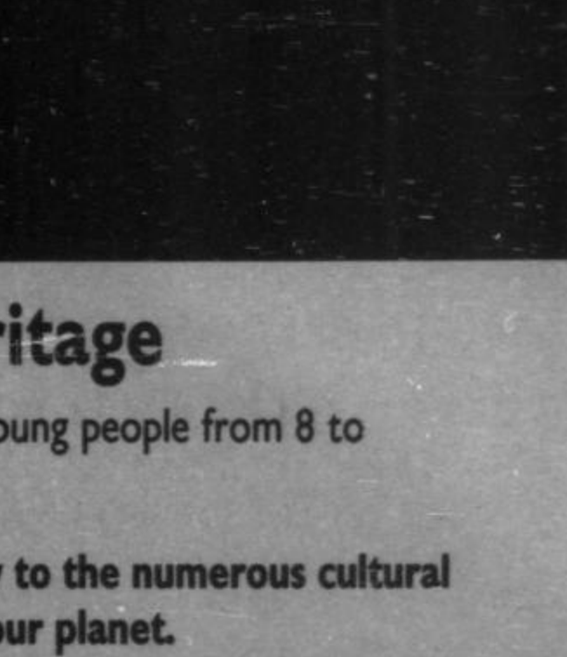

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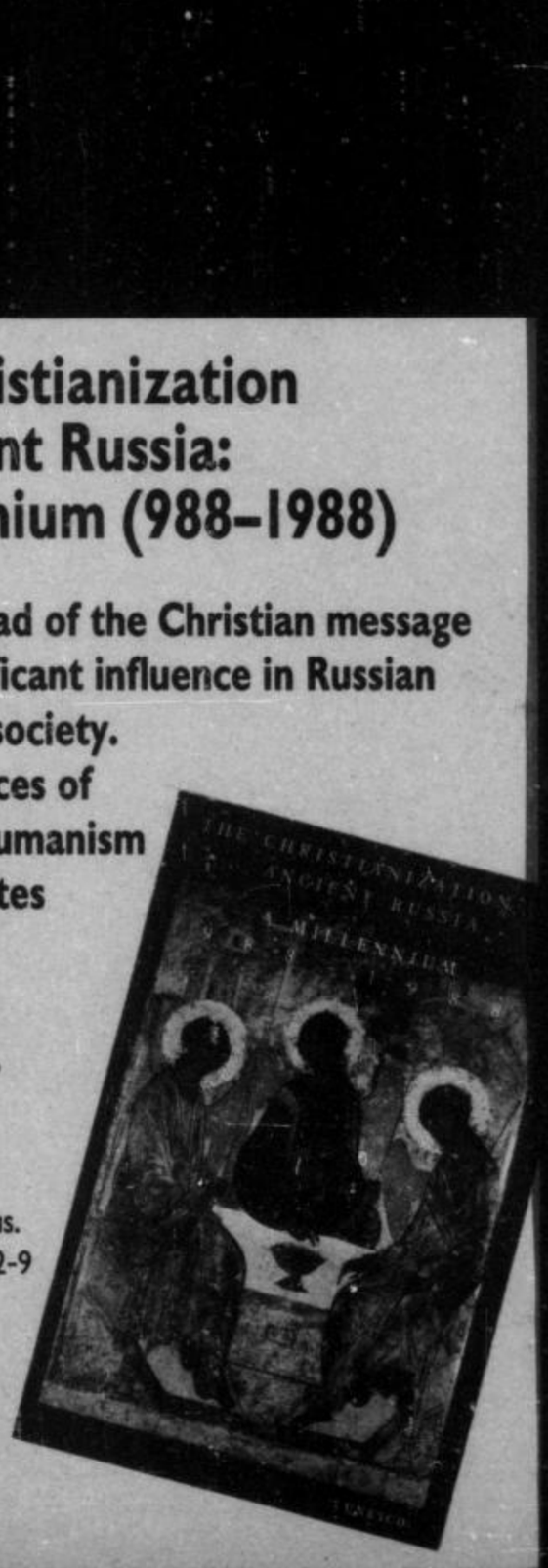

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Big screen, small screen

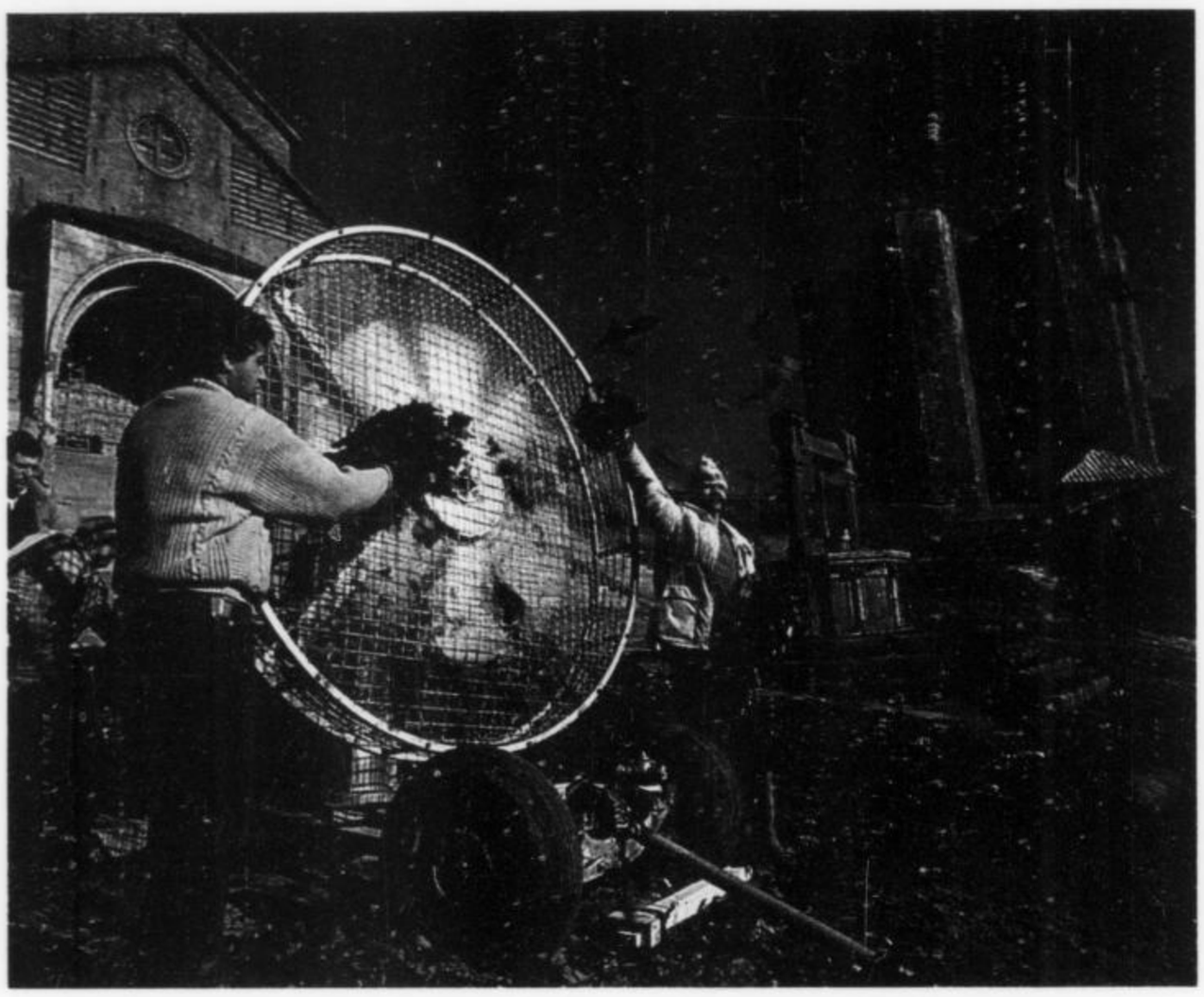
by François Garçon

Is television a rival or an ally of the cinema?

IT is fashionable to criticize television. Many people hold it responsible for all the problems facing the cinema today. They blame it for plunging attendance figures and for the closure of movie houses and their transformation into car-parks or supermarkets. To listen to television's detractors, its power to keep paying customers away from all forms of live entertainment, including sport, is virtually boundless. People connected with the performing arts complain bitterly about the increasing encroachments of the small screen.

There is nothing new about complaints against television. Stories of the bitter combat between the large and the small screen are legion, and in some cases barely credible. In 1960, for instance, cinema-owners in Paris's Latin Quarter protested about the appearance of television receivers in the bistros of the rue de la Huchette and the boulevard Saint-Michel. They claimed that the black-and-white sets perched above the bars were providing free film shows for a clientele of penniless students. Countless misdeeds have been laid at television's door. It is high time that someone took on the thankless task of stating the case for television and answering its critics.

Robert Mitchum and Marilyn Monroe starred in Otto Preminger's *River of No Return* (1954), above.



"Making films is a very costly business. . . ." Above, shooting *The Name of the Rose*, filmed by Jean-Jacques Annaud in 1986. Below, Neil Jordan's *Mona Lisa* (1986) was financed by Britain's Channel Four television network.

A GARGANTUAN APPETITE FOR FILMS

Making films is a very costly business. In 1991, the average budget for a Hollywood feature stretched to $28 million, and a French film typically cost more than FF25 million to make. Sums like that are not easy to come by, and television has now become an indispensable source of supplementary finance for film-makers. Backing from public and subscription channels in Europe and North America currently makes up about 30 per cent of film financing. No producer today outside the big Hollywood studios or such well-capitalized groups as Gaumont in France can start shooting without having pre-sold his film to television—especially since crucial public subsidies often depend on a contract guaranteeing television screening.

What is more, most films cannot pay their way on theatre showings alone. Statistics from the United States, which may also be valid for the industry worldwide, show that only one film in ten makes a profit on the big screen, while at least seven lose money. Losses would be even greater were it not for the second lease of life films get on television, and in recent years through video. The development of new, movie-oriented television channels like Canal+ in France, Premiere in Germany and Sky Movie in the United Kingdom has brought considerable extra financial support for film companies.

So television provides the film industry with substantial additional funds and regular receipts of the sort that makes backers happy. Financially speaking, when the broadcasters catch a cold—as is the case today for RTVE in Spain or Britain's ITV network—the whole production business sneezes.

The additional market television represents for the film industry also helps film studios to operate more efficiently. The film industry has always had to cope with the problem of slack periods between productions, when overheads such as studio maintenance costs and the salaries of full-time employees still have to be paid. Making films for television, because of its predictable, quasi-industrial nature, can be fitted in between shooting films for the cinema. Telefilm production helps studios to pay their overheads and to manage their operations more rationally.

Furthermore, television is a natural outlet for low-budget films that often have difficulty in finding distributors for cinema release. In the United States in 1986, independent producers made some 470 films, only sixty-nine of which were shown in theatres. More than three-quarters of this output would thus never have had an audience if they had been rejected by television. Because of TV's gargantuan appetite, however, that was fortunately not the case.

A NEW SHOWING FOR MOVIE CLASSICS

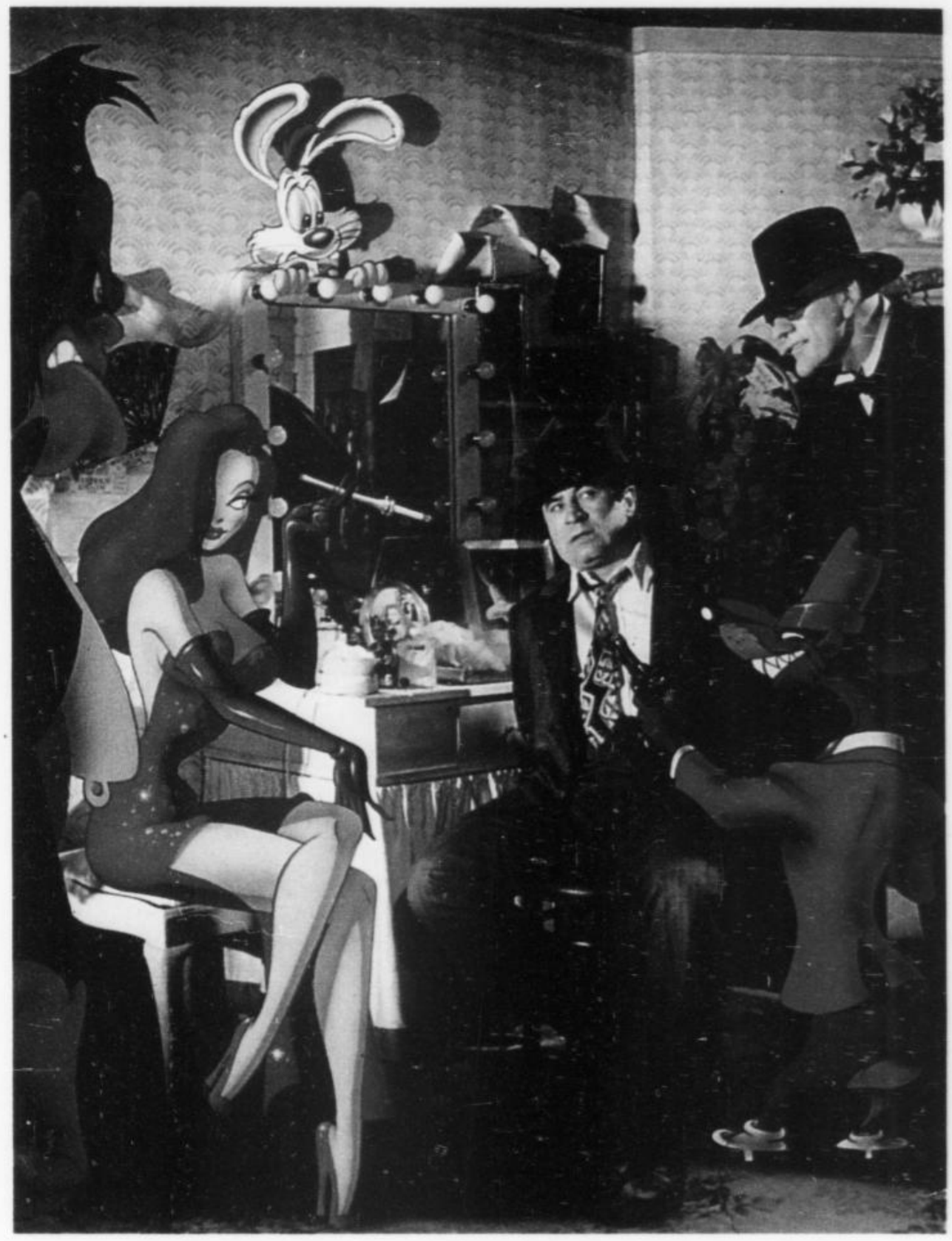
But television offers more than just financial support. It has helped promote the film as an art form, especially among young people. Arthouse films that were once relegated to off-

peak hours are now the staple diet of cinema-heritage channels such as France's Ciné Cinéma and Ciné Cinéphil. In the United States, where cable has existed since the 1950s, the American Movie Classics channel, which only shows films made between 1930 and 1970, had twenty-eight million subscribers in 1991. The Nostalgia Channel, which also shows old films, has ten million. A new public is thereby becoming acquainted with films it would otherwise never have the chance to see unless it frequented the British Film Institute, Belgium's Cinémathèque Royale, the cinémathèques at the Palais de Chaillot and the Pompidou Centre in Paris, or the Cinémathèque Suisse in Lausanne. Such institutions are few and far between, and announce their programmes only shortly before they are shown.

Television has also been in at the birth of several recent movements in film-making. Pressure from television has brought new life to British cinema. Britain's leading contemporary directors have all worked in television, and such well-known films as *Mona Lisa, My Beautiful Laundrette, A Room with a View* and *The Draughtsman's Contract* were all commissioned by Channel 4. The role of the French subscription channel Canal+ has been even more influential, permitting, as no other institution could, thirty or so directors each year to make their debut behind a camera.

It would be wrong to assume that television today only produces bland films with unadventurous story lines. Its commitment to film can be judged from the growing number of film subsidiaries attached to the BBC, Canal+ and Italy's RAI—even though, if the head of Thames Television International is to be believed, the profitability of these companies is far from assured. Finally, television has forced the film industry to differentiate its products from those of the TV studios. The films that prove the biggest international money-spinners, such as *The Bear, The Big Blue, Who Killed Roger Rabbit?* and *Terminator 2,* have generally been made for theatre showing.

The very limitations of television can help cinema in a way by drawing attention to the size of the cinema screen and thus justifying the ever-rising cost of seats in movie-houses. The best-frequented cinemas tend to be the most impressive ones: Kinepolis in Brussels, Kinopanorama or the Max Linder in Paris. In Stockholm cinema complexes with modern sound-



systems pull in the crowds, as they do in Australia, whose modern cinemas have the highest attendance rates in the world after Norway's. In the United Kingdom, figures for cinema-going have just risen back above the 100-million mark, and that at a time when the quantity and quality of televised material on offer have never been so high.

So if television has been detrimental to cinema in the past, today things seem to be moving in the opposite direction. On the one hand television needs more and more films; on the other, the public—fed up with the small and distorted image it sees on the television screen—is starting to go back to the cinema.

Curiously enough, the expensive and anarchic competition that came from TV in the 1960s and 1970s may have helped to modernize the art of cinema and so enabled it to survive. Thanks to television, people still love the cinema. The film industry has been forced to look to its laurels and is today emerging from its lethargy at last. We may be witnessing the start of a long and necessary period of co-operation. ❐

"The films that prove the biggest international money-spinners . . . have generally been made for theatre showing." Above, Robert Zemeckis's *Who Killed Roger Rabbit?* (1988).

FRANÇOIS GARÇON, of Switzerland, is Professor of History, Cinema and Society at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris and is also director of a film finance company. He is the author of *De Blum à Pétain—cinéma et société française 1936-1944* (1981) and, in Italian, *La televisione in Europa* (1990). He is currently working on an economic history of the video cassette recorder, to be published in 1993.

NEWSBRIEFS

FACTS ABOUT TV FICTION

The international flow of fiction programmes, which rank with major sporting events as the most popular type of television, is an increasingly important cultural phenomenon examined in a new UNESCO report entitled *Import/Export: International Flow of Television Fiction*. Edited by Peter Larsen, Professor of Mass Communication at the University of Bergen and author of many works on international communications, the publication is number 104 in UNESCO's "Reports and papers on mass communication" series.
It includes detailed regional surveys as well as specific case-studies of TV fiction produced in Brazil and the United States.
In the coming decade UNESCO intends to establish a network of research institutions to carry out periodic enquiries into the flow of television programmes.

TRIBUTE TO MOTHER TERESA

This year's UNESCO Prize for Peace Education has been awarded to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. According to the jury, the honour rewards "the achievements of a life entirely dedicated to serving the poor, promoting peace and fighting injustice". Born into an Albanian peasant family in Skopje (Yugoslavia) on 27 August 1910, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhui entered, at 18, the Irish order of the Sisters of Loretto. She left the order 20 years later to found the Society of the Missionaries of Charities in Calcutta in order to serve the "poorest of the poor". In 1950, she became an Indian citizen. She started an open-air school for street children, and then, with the help of donations, opened other schools, orphanages, clinics, and, in 1957, a centre for lepers. The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor, will award the 1992 Peace Education Prize to Mother Teresa at UNESCO headquarters on 22 October.

SAVING THE NIGHT SKY

"An essential element of our civilization and culture is rapidly being lost," according to astronomers who met at UNESCO headquarters in July. The astronomers urged UNESCO to do everything within its power to preserve the finest astronomical observatory locations, if possible by designating them World Heritage Sites. Excessive nocturnal lighting, aerosols and dust suspended in the atmosphere, sulphur from fossil-fuel consumption and particles thrown up by volcanic eruptions all contribute to making the stars less visible. Radio pollution and space debris can also cause problems for astronomers. "Astronomy has always been retreating; going further and further away from civilization, seeking out remote locations. But now there is no place left to go," one of the astronomers claimed. He went on to demand "better protection for the best astronomical sites", where the sky is dark and there is no risk of picking up telephone messages or activity from microwave ovens while looking for signals from distant galaxies.

THE BEST OF YOUTH TELEVISION

Children of Waterland, a fictional story made by Dutch television for children up to 7 years of age, was among the winners of this year's Prix Jeunesse International. The prize is awarded by the Prix Jeunesse Foundation, which was established in 1964 under the joint auspices of the city of Munich, Bavarian television and the second German television channel, ZDF, in order to "promote television for children and youth, to develop international exchanges of programmes and to improve understanding between peoples." *The Tower of Babel*, a game-show for children made by Polish television, received the special prize of the German National Commission for UNESCO, while *Beat That*, from Britain's Channel 4, which demonstrates how handicapped children can be helped to develop their potential and play a useful social role, won a special UNICEF prize. *Lelée ou l'aînée de la famille*, made by the broadcasting company of Niger, received a prize sponsored by the German television network Transtel for what the jury described as "its authenticity, its sensitivity and its reflection of two cultures in one country".

EDUCATING STREET CHILDREN

In 1992, according to United Nations estimates, 145 million homeless children around the world live in the street, do not attend school, survive by finding odd jobs, suffer maltreatment and even violence from adults and are sometimes physically eliminated by the police. The children, who are largely ignored by official statistics and rarely taken into account in national education budgets, have been of particular concern to UNESCO since the 155 nations participating in the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, called for immediate action to help such children, minorities and remote rural populations. In co-operation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and a number of non-governmental organizations, UNESCO is seeking to identify and support projects designed to help street children, and is also trying with the aid of the media to make the public and potential aid-donors aware of the gravity of the problem.

EXAMINING THE ROOTS OF VIOLENCE

Torture, assaults on women, children and the old, abuse of human rights, drugs, and even the death penalty were among the forms of violence discussed by more than 1,500 experts who attended the Second World Congress on Violence and Human Coexistence, held in Montreal (Canada) last July. The Congress, held under UNESCO auspices, devoted much of its time to considering the Seville Declaration on Violence, issued in 1986 by 15 scientists on the initiative of the Spanish National Commission for UNESCO. The Declaration said, in substance, that war is not humanity's biological destiny and put forward proposals for the construction of peace. ❐

Commentary by Federico Mayor

This article is one of a series in which the Director-General of UNESCO sets out his thinking on matters of current concern

Learning the lesson of tolerance

"God of all beings, of all worlds and of all time . . . grant . . . that the little difference between [our] clothes, between all our different and inadequate forms of speech, between all our ridiculous customs and imperfect laws, between all our senseless opinions and our estates, so disproportionately different in our eyes and so alike to Thee; grant that these little nuances that distinguish the atoms known as men from one another may not be signals for hatred and persecution".

VOLTAIRE
(Treatise on Tolerance)

THE world whose emergence can be discerned as we stand on the edge of a new era does not inspire whole-hearted enthusiasm. Religious fundamentalism, nationalism, racial and ethnic prejudice, anti-semitism: the winds of freedom have rekindled the embers of hatred. The disappearance of familiar frameworks and standards, the disintegration of geo-ideological demarcations, the challenging of orders once thought to be eternal and inviolable have encouraged the recrudescence of many types of extremism. The collapse of the old order has left the field open for all kinds of new initiatives, some of them extremely chaotic—and violence thrives in a vacuum. Instances of rejection and exclusion are becoming more and more common. Although in some cases irrational forces are clearly at work, in others political, intellectual and public debate is being contaminated in more insidious ways.

There is an urgent need for us to examine our tolerance—or what we think of as tolerance—critically and uncompromisingly. Why does it give the impression of a "fall-back" solution? Does it always spring from the heart, or at least from a conscious act of will? Our answers to these questions will inevitably cause us to question the way we approach, or in some cases fail to approach, those who are different from us. We must force ourselves to make such an approach, hopefully as a first step towards recognizing them in their own right. Tolerance will then cease to be the shadow of its opposite and will take on a force of its own. It will cease to be a woolly concept; instead it will be transformed into bright, metallic clarity.

Of course, the temptation to turn in on oneself and exclude the "other" increases as those who are different from us assert themselves and come ever closer to us in a shrinking world. But history has shown what happens when people retreat into a closed identity and want everyone to "stay where they belong". We must not forget the inevitable outcome: the weakest and most vulnerable social and ethnic groups become scapegoats and the most flagrant injustices are made worse.

Let us abandon that dubious tolerance which allows us to tolerate the intolerable—the poverty, hunger and suffering of millions of human beings. If we do, we shall encounter the warmth of the sunshine of compassion and fraternity. Tolerance will become a fundamental part of our lives. This is my fervent hope, as a millennium which has known so much light and shadow draws to an end which is itself marked with many contrasts. ❐

UNESCO IN ACTION
WORLD HERITAGE

Gorée, island of slaves

BY CAROLINE HAARDT

LYING off the Senegalese coast less than four kilometres from Dakar, whose roadstead it closes, the island of Gorée was for more than three centuries the object of bitter disputes between rival European nations. Its charming little port, protected by a small bay, provided an ideal anchorage for the ships that took African slaves to the colonies across the Atlantic.

In the Middle Ages, all that Europe knew of black Africa was the Moroccan coast as far as Cape Bojador. But in the fifteenth century the discoveries of the Renaissance revolutionized navigational techniques: the compass and the astrolabe made their appearance, as did the caravel, which took the place of galleys and the fragile cogs of the Crusades. Cosmographers affirmed that the world was round and that it should be possible to circle it. Spain and Portugal, then at the summit of their power, were ready to take on any challenge. The rulers of Aragon and Castile sent Christopher Columbus to discover the New World, while Portugal's Prince Henry, known as the Navigator, sent off to Africa the caravels that would discover the maritime spice route.

In 1444, Portuguese explorers under the command of Dinis Diaz passed the mouth of the Senegal river and reached, off Cape Verde, a small uninhabited island about 900 metres long by 300 wide, which they called Palma. Gorée's turbulent history had begun: the island would subsequently change hands seventeen times!

PORTUGUESE AND DUTCH

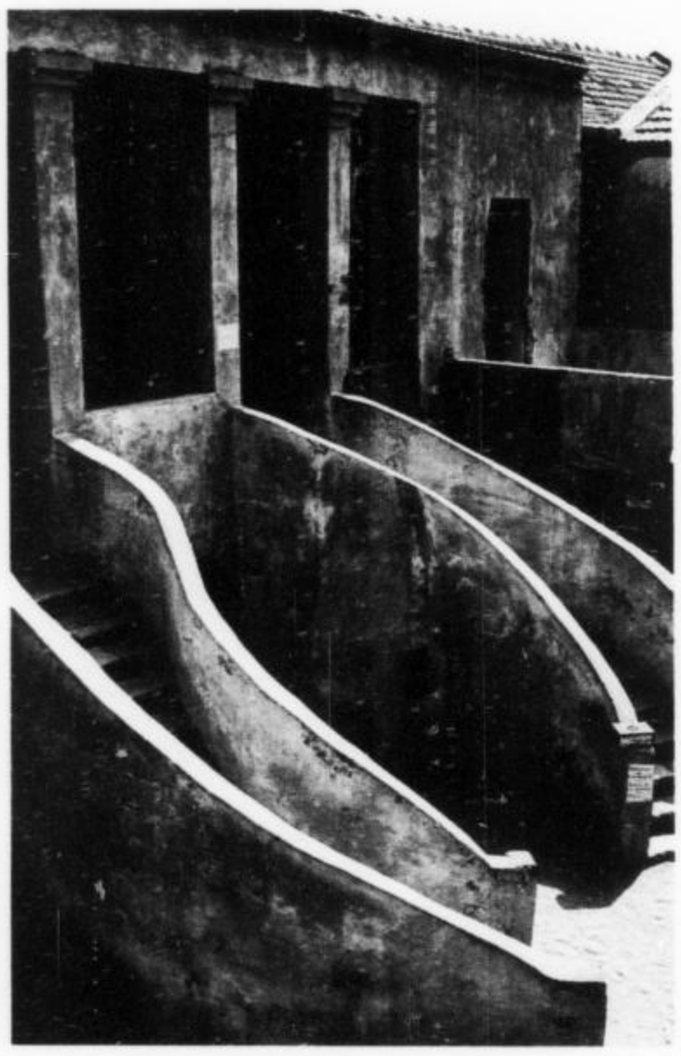
Gorée became a port of call much used by Portuguese vessels, and Fernando Po, Vasco da Gama, Francis Xavier, Camões and many other explorers and missionaries landed there on their way to the Orient. But the island is tiny and infertile, and it long remained uninhabited. The Portuguese who had appropriated it preferred to build their bases on the mainland. They nonetheless allowed English, French and Dutch merchants to repair their boats there and to assemble a fleet of small wooden vessels, as a result of which the island became known as "the isle of longboats".

In 1558, when the Portuguese no longer ruled the seas, the Dutch took control of Palma, which they renamed Gorée (*Goede Reede* means "good anchorage" in Dutch). They built two forts, Nassau and Orange, giving the island a military purpose which it continued to serve until the Second World War. The fortifications were strengthened and kept under repair by successive occupiers of the island.

The Dutch, Portuguese and French long disputed control of this strategically located base, where trading companies made fortunes dealing in gold, gum, wax, hides and ivory. Gorée became a fortified trading-post, overflowing with African products and European merchandise. But its most lucrative business lay elsewhere, in the tragic slave trade.

This traffic had a long history in Africa. For centuries slaves were transported northwards to the countries of the Maghreb. Then, with the coming of the Europeans, the slave trade expanded to America and the West Indies. After the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, Africans began to be shipped in boatloads to Portugal, where they were employed as domestic servants or agricultural labourers. The discovery of the Atlantic islands, where sugar-cane cultivation was soon established, increased the demand for slave labour. The kidnapping of slaves became too haphazard a means of supply, and was replaced by regular trafficking carried out with the complicity of certain African princes.

The House of Slaves (before restoration).



The appetite of the traders was boundless. It has been estimated that in half a century the Portuguese carried off some 150,000 African slaves. Soon Senegal and the Gambia could no longer satisfy their needs, and they went far inland in search of communities willing to provide them with slaves. Later, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it would be the turn of the so-called Slave Coast (today's Gabon and Angola) to furnish human cargoes to be dispatched to Brazil and the West Indies. But Gorée, where the slaves were assembled and branded before being sent off to America, long remained one of the pivots of this odious traffic.

Even before reaching Gorée, the slaves were sorted into ethnic groups and put in irons. On the island they were made to work in spite of their chains. They were used to break rocks, "shift earth, roll water barrels and unload small boats." The women and children, who were not fettered, prepared meals and worked as servants. At night the slaves were crammed into fetid, unlit lockups. Those who rebelled were put in barred cells until the time came for their embarkation, when the company mark was branded onto them with a red-hot iron.

The stay on Gorée was particularly distressing, and the inhuman and degrading treatment meted out to the slaves sometimes drove them to revolt. These risings were usually violent, and although they were repressed with great cruelty, they continued to occur. In Africa as in the Americas, the blacks never resigned themselves to their pitiful condition. Their determination to break the yoke actively contributed to the abolition of the slave trade, and of the institution of slavery itself, at the start of the nineteenth century.

Historians have estimated that the total number of slaves transported out of black Africa was between fifteen and thirty million. It is impossible to know how many passed through Gorée, but it is certain that the very name of the island must have long inspired bitterness and terror.

HAPPIER TIMES

But the history of Gorée does not end with the slave trade. The contacts between Africans and Europeans created a unique, mixed-blood society there. In the wake of the first Portuguese mariners to put into Gorée came an

influx of adventurers known as *lancados* who mingled with the indigenous population, adopting their clothing, language and customs. They grew rich by trading slaves and other merchandise, until the French East India Company declared a monopoly of commerce from 1677 and brought about their decline. But the departure of the Portuguese did not mean the end of the Creole cultural melting pot, which continued under the Dutch, English and French.

In the eighteenth century the population of the island was made up of agents of the East India Company, a garrison of soldiers and a free black community who themselves owned slaves. The tropical climate did not suit Europeans, who were always the first to suffer from diseases for which treatment was then unknown. The menfolk therefore took wives and concubines from among the islanders, contracting what were known as "local marriages". The mulatto offspring of these unions became natural intermediaries between the European trading companies and the mainland African chiefs.

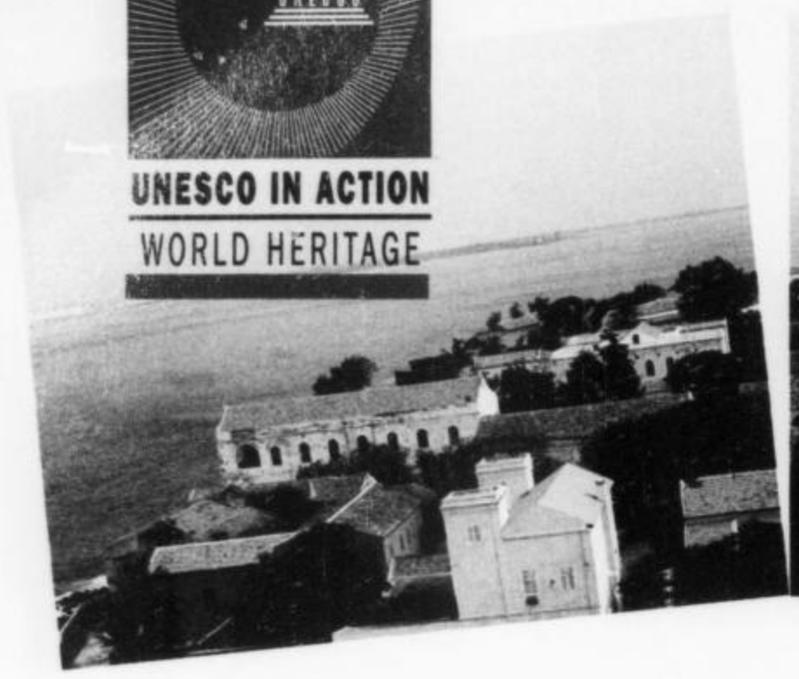
The mulatto women were known as *signares* (from the Portuguese *senhora*). Rich, powerful, covered in jewels and surrounded by servants and slaves whose hair was tressed with golden coins, they reigned over the balls and social life of the island, splendidly combining business and pleasure. In 1767, Cathy Louet, the *signare* of Captain Aussenac, was the wealthiest landowner on the island. On her estate, an acre in extent, she built a vast mansion and employed sixty-eight house slaves. A plan of the island drawn in 1779 by Evrard Duporel shows eleven villas out of eighteen belonging to beautiful mixed-race women such as Anne Pépin, Victoria Albis and Hélène Aussenac.

Gorée's high society led a leisured and sophisticated life, modeling its manners on those currently fashionable in France. There was a vogue for building with the yellow marble extracted from the Castel hill—sometimes to the cost of the island's fortifications. When the marble ran out, it was replaced with basalt or Dakar clay. The bricks were cemented with a mortar of conchiferous limestone mixed with sand. The landscape of the island took on its present form: in the south-west, the barracks; in the south the village of Gourmettes with its population of Christians and educated and baptised blacks; in the east the dwellings of the Bambara. The main public buildings were the hospital and the church. Slave quarters occupied all the lower part of the island, until Nicolas Pépin, a brother of the celebrated *signare*, built the "House of Slaves".

In 1848 Gorée joyfully celebrated the abolition of slavery. Fifteen years earlier, its population had peaked at 5,000 inhabitants. Henceforth it would be the home of only free men and women.

UNESCO IN ACTION

WORLD HERITAGE



After a period of adaptation the island was given new uses. Schools and religious congregations inaugurated a new round of construction. Gorée became a free port, and businesses, shops and bazaars proliferated. From this period of prosperity have survived some cool and elegant houses with balconies and verandahs, wooden galleries and tiled roofs.

THE YEARS OF DECLINE

By the end of the nineteenth century, the island was overpopulated and could no longer satisfy the ambitions of its inhabitants. It gradually lost its commercial privileges to the new capital, Dakar. In commercial matters too it got left behind, not being able to meet the financial demands of ground-nut cultivation. The railway which now linked Saint-Louis to Dakar on the mainland did not help. With the opening of the Suez Canal, Gorée lost its final asset. Boats sailing for Asia no longer broke their journey there.

By 1910 the island's population had been reduced by half, and by 1931 there were only 300 inhabitants left. (There are 900 today). Terrible epidemics of yellow fever had struck in 1859, 1878 and 1927, and contaminated houses were razed to the ground. Gorée sank into a sleep from which it has never entirely awakened.

Now the drowsy little island lives on memories of the carefree luxury and suffering of its past, to the rhythm of the daily coming and going of the boat that links it to the mainland. But new dangers are threatening. Humidity and salt are taking their toll of the buildings, and there are no longer enough inhabitants to maintain them as in former days. Unable to meet the challenge from Dakar, Gorée has become a dormitory suburb. With no local economic activity to keep them, the islanders look for work in the capital. Meanwhile, the island has been invaded by part-time residents who are turning the old slave-quarters into second homes.

In 1980, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, then Director-General of UNESCO, launched an international campaign to preserve the island. He did so to prevent it from falling into oblivion, and to enable it to become instead "a place for meditation . . . where those who are most aware of the tragedies of their history will gain a more real sense of justice and brotherhood." ❐

CAROLINE HAARDT, French journalist, was a staff member of UNESCO's Division of Cultural Heritage from 1983 to 1987.

ANTONELLA VERDIANI is an Italian architect who from 1987 to 1990 lived on the island of Gorée, where she took part in the safeguard campaign. She has been commissioned by the EEC to carry out a study on the rehabilitation of Gorée as a living community.

Gorée today

by Antonella Verdiani

GORÉE's architecture has so many distinctive features that it is possible to talk of a specific Gorean style. Some of these features, such as large, airy rooms opening onto porches, balconies and galleries, are typically colonial. Others are dictated by nature—the use of black volcanic basalt; walls limewashed in pink, ochre and yellow; straw thatched roofs, the flat roofs and red tiles that came later. The effect is so charming and the buildings are so well integrated into their environment, that it is almost possible to forget the island's tragic past.

It has been said that Gorée "has preserved an architectural coherence that combines widely different cultural elements—Christian and Islamic, northern and Mediteranean—a unity imposed by limitations of space, exposure to the ocean winds, the homogeneity of the building materials and, perhaps most of all, the forces of a tumultuous history that turned every dwelling into a slave warehouse and a defensive redoubt."

In 1974, at the request of the Senegalese authorities, several consultants made preliminary studies with a view to establishing a detailed plan of action for the protection, preservation and development of this architectural heritage. The plan proposed that ten sites of historic interest should be restored, including the Hortala, Sudan, Diouga Dieng and Victoria Albis houses, the William Ponty School, the Nuns' Pavilion, the remains of the open-air theatre and the harbourmaster's building. It also recommended the establishment of a cultural programme aimed at developing a sense of national identity.

On 22 December 1980, the Director-General of UNESCO appealed to the international community to help safeguard Gorée, which had been placed on the World Heritage List in September 1978.

More than 10 years have now passed since the Plan of Action was adopted. On the positive side, three buildings have been restored and are now serving various cultural functions. The Sudan House has become a research centre; the Harbourmaster's Building is temporarily being used as an annexe to the Université des Mutants; the Victoria Albis house is used for exhibitions, as well as providing a home for the Office of the Architecture of Historical Monuments and for UNESCO's expert on the island. The structure of a fourth building, the Diouga Deng House, is currently being strengthened, and plans to rehabilitate the William Ponty School for residential and cultural use with the aid of the EEC are about to be approved.

But the Plan of Action gives priority to the island's cultural role, and now needs to be reviewed so that more attention is given to the development of the economy and tourism. The risk is that the stress on cultural activities might otherwise turn Gorée into an island museum deserted by its own inhabitants.

The restoration of the House of Slaves is very important in this respect. Even though it was not one of the priorities indicated by the Plan of Action, the building, which has great historical significance, was repaired in 1990/91 with the aid of a French association, the *Comité France Liberté*. It is a typical eighteenth-century slave building, with the trading areas on the ground floor and the masters' apartments upstairs. A small door in the central courtyard opening towards the sea was the threshold through which the slaves passed to the ships that took them to America.

This house, which has become one of the great symbols of slavery, receives more than 20,000 visitors a year from all around the world. Prominent among them are black Americans who come as pilgrims, repeating in a reverse direction the journey their ancestors made from the shores of Africa two centuries ago.

The museum, which has been open for years, has recently been provided with a faithfully reconstructed dwelling-room, furnished for the most part with the original furniture and objects. There is also an exhibition of documents relating to daily life on Gorée in the eighteenth century. ❐

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